New Novel by

JOHN GALSWORTHY

The January

Starts on Page 180.

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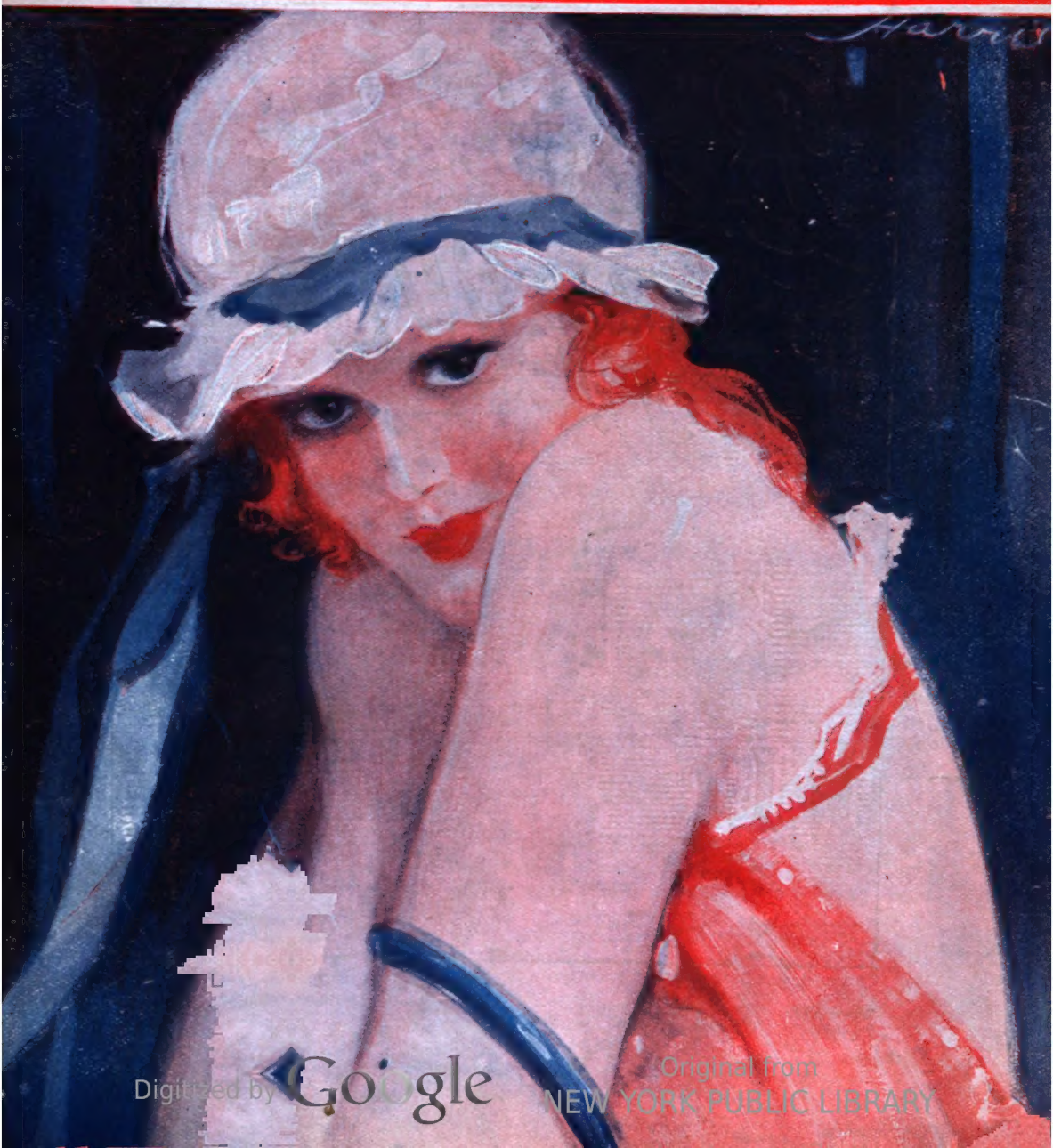

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"On the 11th Instant—"

By Mabel E. Wotton.

Illustrated by John Campbell.

It had been that rarest of all unions—a sanctioned mating of passion. Their eyes had met across the dining-room of an Interlaken hotel. Hers held a tired record of thirty-five years or more, yet were possessed of the baffling quality of intense interest in the thought behind the personality which had arrested them, whilst caring but little for the personality itself. His were of a blue, akin to the blue of the neighbouring glacier, and for the moment were as unconcerned. Then the blue darkened. By the end of the first week they were old friends. By the end of the second he had forced the confession that from the moment of meeting they had been lovers.

"Eton. Magdalen. And here I am. A few hundreds a year and some ill-kept acres in Devon."

The woman's story was equally uneventful, the greyness of it contrasting with his younger sunshine. An impoverished rectory; the ill-paid grind of daily teaching; and then this, the first holiday of her life.

"It shall last for ever," vowed the lad, and for one glad year, after they had chosen the loved little London home, his promise had held good for both of them. But now?

Watching the unconscious face on the pillow as he sat a hand's breadth from her bed, he told himself that for a month past he had endured the rackings of the damned. Was he to lose her? Was this to be the hideous ending to the poetry of their lives, which had beat its rhythm so masterfully, so exultantly, through his own leaping pulse, so tenderly and so melodiously through hers?

He stooped to kiss the little blue vein which showed above her wrist. The delicate tracery formed straggling lines in which Love's wisdom could read the initial of his name, and since this had been her own most wonderful discovery, amongst her good-night kisses the wrist had ever to be reckoned with. But the uncanniness of a kiss that woke no answering smile chilled and troubled him afresh, and he drew back into his chair at the uneasy angle of a body full of tension.

The nurse was in the adjoining room. The doctor had promised a speedy third visit. Was this heavy sleep a good omen, or was it merely symbolic of the weakness they had been combating since that day of the slip on the stairs when he had caught her in frightened arms, only to be met by the laughing assurance that both she and her precious burden were safe?

He crept noiselessly to the door, exchanged some words with the kindly, eager nurse, and crept back again.

How still she was. How very—*still*. A sudden panic seized him, and he slid his hand under the bedclothes to be nearer the feel of her dear body. He gained a dim comfort from the touch of it, which the nurse's trained intelligence had not been able to impart; and his thoughts, shuttle-cocking from despair to joy, leapt suddenly back to the days when they had been so wholly, so supremely happy.

The promised coming of the child had meant much to him. To her, or so he had been told, it had meant more.

"Don't you believe it," he had cried jealously. "My hat! What a cram! If you give him your darling wrist, won't you believe it then?"

And she had leant back upon her cushions and had smiled at him, wholly content.

Until he should come to her, soft and warm and cuddlesome, her baby seemed to her centuries old, as old as the eternal verities, as old as Love, as old as God Himself. But this boy-husband of hers, with his Oxford slang and his young power of emphasis, she felt him aeons younger than her son. Her smile mothered him.

Watching by the bedside, his hand and

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He stooped to kiss the little blue vein which showed above her wrist. . . . But the uncanniness of a kiss that woke no answering smile chilled and troubled him.

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arm still circling her, he began thinking of his first hearing of their hope. He had planned it with himself, with that subconscious ego which is never far distant from the elbow of twenty four, that if ever potential father-hood should materialise, his thoughts, his expressions, shou'd naturally outvie all classical, all profane, and all biblical history. When he actually learnt it, all he had managed to do was to get into the garden and there kick a pebble down the gravel path.

"A kiddy of my own. By Jove! A little kid of my own. Wonder if he'll like—"—the pebble lost itself in a flowering bed—"geraniums?"

He had never cared much for flowers, but whether his boy—Lord! how well it sounded! *his boy*—should care for geraniums or should not care for them now seemed a matter of surprising moment.

His meditations had run him shortly and at hot speed into the house.

"Aren't there?—I say, don't they?"—For the first time in her recollection his speech was awkward, his face a shamed, ugly red. "Don't women buy books about what they ought to do when—well, when the kiddy's coming, you know."

For a moment it is possible that she forgot even him.

"I think I'd rather trust to God, and—and you," she said very softly.

The boy pondered a moment, puzzled over it, then gave up the problem.

"All right. But *I* shall buy the lot of 'em," he said briefly.

From that moment the two tongues never flagged. Cyprian was the family name after which he hankered. Although she had never considered it, within an instant she was convinced it was the loveliest name upon earth.

"We can call him Cyp!" she suggested.

Any abbreviation savoured of Oxford days, and thereby won his approval. Cyp it was to be.

There were many hours when she rested and when he paced the tiny gravel path. It is the peculiar prerogative of all lovers to move unhampered by a sense of humour, and yet be unashamed of their nakedness. He was so in love with this son of his, so enamoured of this tiny thing which should embody that first glance of eyes, that first exchange of kisses at distant Interlaken, that his visions did not strike him as absurd, or even unlikely, when he pictured Cyprian now as field-marshal and now as Irving's successor, now as premier and now as viceroy. He would be one or all of these things. England herself should glory hotly that he had been born. Yet still, wonder of wonders! Cyp would be his little kiddy.

In his thoughts he was still away in the garden, still kicking at the loose stones and planning his son's future when she moved. Even to his ignorance the movement was unusual. The restless stir of the head, the incessant and incoherent murmur, brought nurse and doctor to the door. Then his wife's voice rose shrilly, harking back upon a time in her life, of which indeed he had heard, to which he had accorded a sympathetic hearing, which, nevertheless, was a time the memory of which had made but little dint upon his consciousness.

"One and two and three and four, and, one and two and three and four, and——" sang the tired voice.

The lad gulped, and moved to the window, looking out upon the trim, respectable street with glazed and staring eyes. The minutes dragged on. "One and two, and——"

"A fine boy, and—Good God!" cried the little doctor.

It was a wretched half-hour, and a full one, full with agony and love and death; and also with the knowledge that a street-hawker crying his wares in the respectable street below had a particularly raucous voice.

"Dead, is he? Only breathed twice. But a fine boy." The lad heard himself repeating words mechanically, and he put a strong curb upon himself, fearing he might add: "And he will never care for the geraniums now."

Possibly he did add it, though he thought not.

After what seemed interminable hours, the people who were doing things, and the people who were whispering to him, went away, and he was left alone with that carved image of the son who might have been, lying stiffly in the ribboned cradle, and with his wife fallen back into the slumber of a year, or was it an hour, ago? The fire burnt low and the room was darkened. Everything depended upon quiet and her length of sleep, said the last of the crowd as it tiptoed away.

Suddenly she roused. The fire had shot into fitful sparkles, and when her eyes opened and fixed upon him he knew it for an appeal. Too weak to part her lips, too weak to raise a hand, if their eyes could meet she knew he would understand.

"Had Cyp come? Was it Cyp? Was *he* glad? . . . Dear God in Heaven, wasn't he *glad* that the longed-for baby had come? Had he . . ." The tired eyes closed for a moment, and the fire sparkles drooped. . . . "Had he noted the tiny white wrist? Was the initial letter there in loyal-blue tracery?"

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Lastly, for the brave strength was failing, and her panting breaths scarcely stirred the frail lace at her throat: "Might she not kiss Cyprian just for once? She would be so good afterwards if only she might kiss him just that once." The actual words trembled at length through the white lips. "Let me kiss him, darling. I'll be so good after. Let me kiss him, just this once."

Everything depended upon the length of sleep.

He raised the small, straight figure which never would be Cyp, and then frenzied at the thought of what the chill of it would tell her, he seized at some of the poor finery she had prepared for Cyprian and which lay on a chair hard by, and held it over the fire. When the heat caught it he still held it with hands that welcomed the pain, and then wrapped it glowing around the little dead body, squeezing out the flame as he ran to lay his burden in the welcoming bend of her outstretched arm.

She groped together the smouldering shawl, their dead child, and his own livid face, into one feeble, clinging embrace.

"He is so soft and warm. So very warm," she faltered. "Ah! Cyp, Cyp. Our little Cyp!"

After she had sunk lower on to her pillows, and thence into a merciful oblivion, he put the baby back into its cradle and the singeing rags into the dying embers of the fire. Then he sat down again, looking vacantly at his burnt hands, and waited.

MENDIN' NETS.

A powerful lot of time it takes—
Mendin' nets;
I've sat so long my old bones aches—
Mendin' nets;
But, well, there's worser jobs at sea,
And peaceful-like down 'ere it be;
It ain't a job as worries *me!*—
Mendin' nets!

I don't miss much of what goes by—
Mendin' nets;
It don't affect my weather eye—
Mendin' nets!
I sits 'ere workin' 'ard, I do,
So quiet-like, I might have grew!
But lor'! I've seen a thing or two—
Mendin' nets!

The bright young lads they laughs at me—
Mendin' nets;
They thinks a doleful job it be—
Mendin' nets!
And off they goes a-gettin' wed,
But lor'! they oughter heed old Ned,
And sit anigh the creek instead—
Mendin' nets!

M. Dean.

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The Affair of the Avenue Louise.

By William Le Queux.

Illustrated by A Gilbert.

This is another exciting story of Mr. Le Queux's new series, relating the adventures of Claud Heathwaite, C.B., chief travelling agent of the Foreign Office, London. These stories are the very breath of intrigue and romance, for Mr. Le Queux is a cosmopolitan to his finger-tips, and his knowledge of European secret diplomacy is unrivalled.

HALFWAY up the delightfully leafy Avenue Louise, between the Place Louise and the Bois de la Cambre—the Hyde Park of Brussels—on the left-hand side, there stands a large white house with spacious balcony on the first floor, and green sun shutters. That house has, for me, certain strange memories.

After my adventures in Budapest I had been able, on my return, to snatch a couple of weeks' rest, which I spent in Cheshire at my old friend's, Mr. Merriman's, invitation, and, needless to say, I passed most of the time with Myrtle, of whom I had become very fond. Mr. Merriman rather annoyed me by his constant reference to our narrow escape from the Bolshevik hatred in Moscow, and his expressions of thanks for his daughter's rescue.

At last my leave was up, and I had not been back in Dover Street twenty-four hours when I was entrusted with another mysterious mission, on this occasion to the Belgian capital.

Time was of greatest importance, therefore within a couple of hours of leaving the Chief's room in Downing Street I was at the London Terminal Aerodrome at Croydon, and very soon on my journey by air across the Straits of Dover.

The day was bright and sunny. My pilot was one of the cross-Channel experts who flew daily between Croydon and Le Bourget, and the journey proved uneventful. Indeed, the sea when we left Dover behind and steered across to Ostend was like glass, and the shipping below showed like toy vessels upon a lake. Soon we passed over Ostend, with its long Digue, and the broken mole of Zeebrugge, and thence, following the railway line inward, we flew over Ghent, with its many spires, and eventually landed at Turvueren, just outside Brussels.

I had only a suit-case with me, therefore, leaving the pilot to return, I took a tram down to the Boulevard Anspach, where I was about to enter the Grand Hotel.

Just at that moment, however, my eyes caught sight of a young widow in deep mourning emerging from the entrance. That decided me.

So Madame Bracq was at the Grand! It would, therefore, not do for me to put up there also. Hence I turned upon my heel, and, finding a taxi, drove to a small, unpretentious little place called the Hôtel Chazal, in the Rue de la Fourche. And there I effaced myself under the name of Luigi Rossana—in which name I produced a passport complete with a photograph—taking a cheap room on the fifth floor, where my illumination at night was from a candle.

The Palace Hotel or the Grand were, I knew, unsafe for me. Hence I went to that obscure place in the narrow, hilly street in the old part of the capital. Brussels I had known for twenty years. My chief fear was that some of my friends might recognise me.

My face pained me on account of the cutting wind I had experienced during my rapid transit from England to Belgium. But after a good wash I felt fresher, and, having eaten a dish of eggs in the rather frowsy little *salle-à-manger*, wherein sat a crowd of French commercial travellers, I went forth into the Montagne de la Cour to wander in the city.

The afternoon was bright and I knew my way well. Indeed, I knew that pavement over which I walked and the cobbles which I crossed, as well as I did Piccadilly.

The one curious fact which obsessed me

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was that I should have had the good—or was it evil?—fortune to have met Madame Bracq coming from the Grand Hotel into the Boulevard Anspach.

And she presented such a pathetic, demure and interesting figure! I smiled within myself as I turned the corner past the Bourse, and entered the boulevard. Truly, strange adventures come to every man—or woman. And I certainly had had my share of them!

Later I had the daring to enter the bureau of the Grand Hotel and inquire for Mr. Bolderson. I hoped that the reception clerk, an old retainer, would not recognise me in the old and rather frayed suit which I had taken from my modest baggage. In it I presented a somewhat penurious figure—just as I wished.

The grey-haired reception clerk, who five years before had always bowed to me obsequiously because I was a foreign diplomat, lifted his eyes, and said sharply in French:

"Yes. M'sieur Bolderson is staying here. What do you want with him?"

"Nothing," I replied meekly. "I am the servant of an Englishman at the Palace Hotel, and he sent me across to see if Mr. Bolderson is staying here. That is all."

"*Bien!*" he snapped, and turned his attention to his big register of visitors.

Outside in the sunny boulevard I laughed to myself as I thought how completely I had deceived the whiskered old Belgian; besides which I had satisfied myself of Mr. Bolderson's presence without arousing his suspicion that I had inquired. The *chef de reception* would I knew, never trouble to tell his visitor of my call. Had I inquired of the *concierge*, then he would have chattered. I knew too much of *concierges*, who always hold out the open palm.

I strolled along the Boulevard Anspach as far as the big Café Métropole and sat down at one of the little tables set upon the pavement, where I drank a *demi-blonde*. I had only been in Brussels three hours, and I had already made two discoveries of importance, namely, that both Mr. Bolderson and the smart young widow who called herself Madame Bracq were staying at the Grand.

For that day it was sufficient. I did not wish to hurry the inquiry, because had I done so I might have been recognised, and all my plans been thereby upset. So I spent the evening with my friend, the second secretary of the British Legation, at his pretty house in the outskirts. I told him, in confidence, of my flight from London that day, but I did not explain the reason the Chief had sent me into Belgium.

Such a course was against the rule the Chief had made. He always laid before me the problem, with an explanation of all he knew, and left it to me to carry out the inquiries at my discretion, confiding the truth to any third party when absolutely necessary, that third party being invariably a secret agent of our Government.

Since the War our Intelligence Department had advanced by strides. The well-known journalist who in 1914 gave it the appellation of the Lack-of-Intelligence-Department had been compelled to admit that the word "lack" must be omitted. The British Empire was, after the Armistice, the most alert in all matters of secret service. That I can vouch for from personal knowledge.

Well, that evening I spent with my friend, who was with me in Constantinople during the first Balkan war, was a pleasant one. With his wife I played bridge, a French lady, the Comtesse d'Etienne, being the fourth. And later I returned to my top room lit by a candle.

A fortnight passed.

I was an Italian out of work. I dressed as such, and I spoke the Florentine dialect. I prided myself that it would have taken a Florentine himself to unmask me. I congratulated myself upon it, for I knew exactly where to aspirate my "c's." That had come to me in my boyhood days.

That fortnight I spent in seeking clerical work. I found it at the office of an English estate agent in Messrs. Orpen Frères, who arranged the letting of flats and villas to English or American clients. But I may here tell you that my friend engineered the affair for me, and I became a humble clerk in the employ of the firm.

My means were limited. I ate sparingly at my hotel, and led the proprietor to think I had great difficulty each week in paying my bill. One must not show too great resources when one is posing as a poor clerk.

The humour of it all struck me many times when I went up and down the streets and boulevards of Brussels, past the houses where I had been welcomed and had dined, and where I should be again hailed with delight, now wearing a threadbare suit and a battered hat—the clerk of Orpens' in the Rue ———.

Yet I was compelled to take precautions—serious precautions. At the Hôtel Chazal I had met an elderly Frenchman named Fayet, a commercial traveller from Lyons. On the first day he entered the *salle-à-manger* he claimed acquaintance with me.

He rushed across, and, grasping my hand enthusiastically, exclaimed in French:

"Ah! M'sieur Bennet! How are you,

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my dear friend? I wrote to you in London a month ago, but have had no reply. Where have you been since we were together in Barcelona?"

"Barcelona!" I echoed, smiling and staring him straight in the face. "I—I think, m'sieur, that you are mistaken! I have never been in Barcelona in my life!"

"But surely you are Monsieur Bennet?" cried the man, much puzzled.

"That is not my name," I replied, rather coldly. "You have made a slight mistake, m'sieur."

My fellow-guest hesitated. Then, recovering himself, said:

"I—I must apologise. I have been mistaken. But M'sieur Bennet was so very much like you!"

Within myself I smiled. What Fayet had said was perfectly correct. As Bennet I had carried out an inquiry in Barcelona nine months previously, a small one which had fortunately been successful, and for which the Chief had given me a few words of praise.

As clerk to Orpen Frères I had but little to do. I was only waiting. My two fellow clerks could not make me out. Each morning I went to the office and toyed with figures which for the life of me I could not understand.

But this unexpected encounter with the silk manufacturer's traveller was annoying. Still, I succeeded in disarming his suspicions, though I was compelled to avoid him during the week he remained in Brussels.

Now, my inquiry concerned—to a very great extent—the good-looking young widow, Madame Bracq. When at last the man, Fayet, left the Belgian capital, I became more alert. But it was weary waiting. Often I watched the young widow, unseen by her. Sometimes I sat in the same restaurant where she was in the habit of taking her luncheon—the Tavern Joseph, not far from the hotel on the opposite side of the way.

Frequently she had with her an elderly, long-whiskered Belgian, who lived in the Rue des Augustins, and whose name was Fassiaux. Their habit, too, was to take their *aperitif* at the Trois Suisses, in the Rue des Princes. And all the time I kept my position as a humble, hard-working clerk—an Italian who spoke bad English and worse French; for, thanks to my cosmopolitan birth, I can imitate the broken language of both nations fairly well.

One day a widow came to the office of Orpen Frères to make inquiries as to the renting of a house in the Avenue Louise which the firm had advertised in the *Independance Belge*. The widow was none other than Madame Bracq. Mr. Orpen saw her, and after telling her the conditions and the rent—a rather stiff one, because it was in the best quarter of Brussels—I was called and ordered to accompany the lady to view the house.

A taxi was waiting, and in it we drove together, she little dreaming that my sojourn in Brussels was in order to be near her and her friends. She regarded me as a poor polyglot clerk, just as I hoped she would.

At the house we met the *concierge*, an old man from the country in felt slippers and blue blouse, who showed us over the spacious mansion with that obsequiousness of servants of all nations who hope to be employed by the incoming tenant. Madame was greatly taken by the house, and that same afternoon she signed a contract and paid a year's rent in advance.

What had happened was just as I had anticipated. Swiftly several of the rooms were redecorated, and within three weeks a large quantity of old-fashioned furniture, which had been in store since before the War, was brought in, Madame superintending everything entirely unaided.

Monsieur Fassiaux had left Brussels, and though I knew that Madame was a friend of Mr. Bolderson, who also lived at the Grand, yet I never saw them together.

Madame was, after all, just as artful as she was good-looking. But what delighted me more than anything was that after signing the contract she slipped ten francs into my hand. By that I knew she had no suspicion.

The day after she moved from the Grand Hotel to her new quarters was a Sunday, and she piously went to Mass at St. Gudule, the beautiful old cathedral church of Brussels. As usual, there was a large congregation, and as I knelt upon a rush-covered hassock I watched her intently.

She presented an interesting figure in her long crêpe veil and funereal black, although among the congregation there were many widows of those brave Belgians who gave their lives for their country when pushed back into Flanders. But as I watched I saw quite plainly that she had not come there to worship. Her attendance at Mass was only a "blind."

On entering she had crossed herself very piously, afterwards glancing swiftly around, for she had a rendezvous. Far away in the left aisle, up against the wall, was a young man with lank, yellow hair; a somewhat artistic person he appeared to be. In an

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instant she espied him, and crossing there, she threw herself upon her knees close beside him.

The young fellow struck me as being an art-student, one of the many who came to Brussels from all over Europe to study in the famous galleries the wonderful works of Rubens and Rembrandt, and often the mad imagery of Wiertz.

He was a stranger; hence I at once took an intelligent interest in him. Madame, had she seen me, would, I knew, not have taken alarm, for what more natural than that the poor clerk employed by an English estate agent should go to Mass on Sunday? So, at any rate, I was safe.

As the pair knelt together I rose and moved nearer to them. Again I sank upon a rush hassock and watched. Though apparently intent on their devotions, it was quite plain to me that they were keeping a secret rendezvous.

Perhaps the young man had a message for her? It struck me very forcibly that he had, because, soon after she had taken up her position, he inclined his head towards hers, and I felt certain he was whispering to her. I still watched. Presently she, in turn, spoke to him in an undertone.

He shifted uneasily, and then replied. Afterwards she rose and seated herself upon the rush-bottomed chair, still most pious in attitude. Then, after further pretended devotions, she rose and left. I did not follow. My interest was now centred in the young man who had given her some message in secret. Madame was certainly wily, or she would never have adopted that clever course to evade observation or suspicion. It was evident she feared lest she might be watched!

The young man presently left the church on tip-toe, and as soon as he had passed out, I followed.

At the bottom of a flight of steps stood a yellow two-seater car. In it sat a stout, hulking young woman—a Walloon peasant she seemed to be. He mounted at her side, started the engine, and, without a word, slid down the hill and out of my sight.

But I had noted the car and its number. Half-an-hour later I was in the bureau of the Municipality of Brussels, and, after payment of a fee, I was allowed to examine the register of motor-cars owned by Belgians.

At last I found it. The car in question belonged to a young man of fashion named Jean Hymans, living at the Château d'Aye at La Roche, away in the rural Ardennes.

Next day I took train, a journey of four hours, to the picturesque little village which I found situated on the banks of the rippling Ourthe in a valley most charming and remote from the world's troubles. Halfway down the village I found an old-world posting-house called the Hôtel de la Poste, before which several little iron tables and chairs and one or two tubs of evergreens had been set upon the cobbled footway.

I lunched there with a purpose. I ordered a good *déjeuner*, and I had a chat with the stout proprietor, who wore a clean blue smock and smoked a huge pipe.

Yes. He knew Monsieur Hymans, of course. He was a young fellow who had come to La Roche from Antwerp with his father about six months before. The latter, a diamond dealer, had taken the Château d'Aye, a small country house further up the river; but about two months later Hymans *père* had died in Paris owing to a taxicab accident, and nowadays the son seldom visited La Roche. That is what he told me.

"The lad is a gay dog, is he not?" I remarked, as I lifted my glass of Benedictine which we were drinking together after luncheon.

"They say so," replied the prosperous old Belgian, whose house had been the headquarters of the German Crown Prince during the early days of the invasion of the kingdom. "There used to be a young war-widow very often visiting him — a pretty woman who came in a big blue car."

"Who was she?" I asked.

"I do not know her name, m'sieur."

But I knew. It was, as I suspected, Madame Bracq.

I discovered that the old diamond dealer of Antwerp had taken the château from a well-known Brussels lawyer, and that before his tragic end in Paris he had entertained largely. There were constant week-end parties at the house — people of artistic appearance, my friend the *hôtelier* explained.

Later, I took a *fiacre* and drove out along the winding road which led through the chestnut woods which lined the bank of the pretty stream, a spot undisturbed save by the angler and the heron, until I came to the château. It was simply a country villa of no distinction, horribly glaring, and terribly modern.

In Belgium, as in France, the ancient fortress and the most jerry-built country house are equally called châteaux. The Château d'Aye was a good-sized modern villa with a weedy garden which ran down to the river bank, with a few uncared-for and unpruned fruit-trees.

Noting this, I dared to approach it—passing through a cheap iron gate and across short path of red gravel.

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An old man, who evidently acted as gardener and caretaker, met me.

"Is this house to let?" I asked him in French. "A friend of mine in Brussels told me that Monsieur might be prevailed upon to let it."

"No, m'sieur," was the old man's reply. "My master has told me nothing. I do not think he intends letting it."

"He doesn't often come here, I suppose?"

"Not much. He was here yesterday with Madame and her husband."

"Madame — oh! you mean Madame Bracq?"

"Yes, m'sieur, and her husband, the Englishman. Such a nice gentleman. You know him—eh?"

His words surprised me, but at haphazard I replied:

"You mean Mr. Bolderson?"

"Yes, m'sieur. They married recently—in London."

"I did not hear much about it. What did you hear?"

"Well, from what Madame's maid, Pierette, told me, it seems that Monsieur Bolderson met Madame in London a few months ago and married her at some place called Hampstead. I do not know where it is."

"Ah!" I replied, still posing as an Italian. "I know London very little. I was only there once—for a fortnight—just before the War."

"I've never been," said the old man."

"They have been down here visiting, I suppose?" I remarked, as, having put five francs into the old man's hand, I was about to turn away.

"Yes. Twice. When they were down here, quite a number of other visitors came to call. Madame must be a well-known person," was the honest old fellow's reply.

I smiled, and, with a cheery *bon-jour*, left him and returned to La Roche, having gained the information I wanted. It was not before midnight that I returned to my obscure hotel in Brussels, and that night I lay awake for many hours trying to piece together the tangle of facts.

Next evening, after dark, I watched the house which the young widow had taken in the Avenue Louise. The night was wet, and my vigil was anything but pleasant. But I had eaten a good meal at the Taverne de la Régence in the Rue Royale, and I waited in patience.

The only caller was Mr. Bolderson. That he was Madame's husband I had suspected from the first, but it was certainly strange that, if they were husband and wife, they only met in secret. He remained about an hour, and then he was let out by a young man-servant and walked leisurely down to the boulevard.

I followed him unseen. He entered a café on the left-hand corner of the Place Louise, flung himself into a chair, and impatiently called the waiter, ordering a drink and the *Independance*. The whiskered man brought the paper mounted upon a stick, and then went to fetch the *bock*.

Bolderson seemed nervous and upset, a fact which increased my interest. What had occurred? He had seen his wife and it was evident that she had told him something which had upset him in a very great degree.

With quick eagerness he examined the columns of the newspaper which the waiter handed him, until he apparently found an article in which he became instantly absorbed.

Afterwards he took a penknife from his pocket and, slashing out the article, folded it and put it into his pocket with a smile of satisfaction. Then he rose and left.

Later I crossed to the café, obtained the mutilated paper, and, on comparing it with a copy intact, found that the article which had interested him so much was a severe criticism of the Belgian Government's policy in certain matters appertaining to Germany. There was nothing in the article that struck me as being in the least curious. Indeed, it would only appeal to the Belgian interested in the foreign affairs of his nation.

On many occasions I watched Madame's house in the Avenue Louise, and saw that on certain evenings she had a number of visitors. She gave a reunion each week. One afternoon, however, I rang boldly at the front door, and, posing as the clerk of Orpen Frères, was shown upstairs into the great salon, which overlooked the delightful Avenue, one of the finest thoroughfares in Europe, where I found Madame.

Two things struck me as curious. I had not been announced, and it was apparent that she had been eagerly awaiting the arrival of somebody else. She had no doubt told her man she expected a caller, and that he was to be admitted at once. Her surprise at seeing me was great.

I apologised, and then said:

"I have been sent by my firm, Madame, to say that they have just had an inquiry from a very wealthy American client who is anxious to rent a house of this description. He is prepared to pay a high rent, therefore Monsieur Orpen wonders if you are thinking of sub-letting your house, either furnished or not?"

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The young *valet-de-chambre* . . . had been horrified at discovering his mistress in the *decolletée* dress she had worn at her reception on the previous evening, stretched upon the carpet with a knife in her breast [*Page 211, col. 1.*]

"I have no intention of doing so at present," was her reply, but in the meantime my eyes had taken in every detail of the apartment. "Perhaps I might desire to do so later on," she added. "If so, I will let your firm know."

"I have not seen it since you have furnished it," I remarked, glancing around in admiration.

"Oh, of course not!" was her reply. "Come and see the little salon," and she took me to the adjoining room, and thence

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to the *salle-à-manger* below. All the rooms were very tastefully furnished and with considerable luxury, but somehow I knew that she was not frank with me—that she was concealing something. It was strange that a woman should pose as a widow and only meet her husband in secret.

Some deep game was being played, and to fathom the mystery I was there in Brussels at the Chief's orders.

When I left her I reviewed the situation. I had discovered a number of facts, but they only served to puzzle me the more. Madame's visitors were of the best class of the Bruxellois—aristocrats, politicians, officials, military officers, with their womenkind. The latter aped to be thought Parisiennes, but possessed neither the grace nor the *chic*. Diligent inquiry failed to elicit anything remarkable concerning them. Yet something curious was in progress. Of that I felt confident.

Indeed, only after midnight, when Madame was alone, would Bolderson let himself in with his latchkey. Sometimes he would remain only ten minutes. At others he was with his wife an hour or more. On such occasions I saw a light in the little salon, and it was evident they were in consultation.

One evening the long-haired Belgian named Fassiaux, whom I had not seen for weeks, appeared among the guests, and accompanying him was the young man, Jean Hymans, who, I found out, had been in Paris. I did not know they were friends until I saw them laughing together as they approached the big white house.

I waited beneath the trees upon a bench which lay back in the deep shadow. It was a bright starlit night, and I knew myself to be well concealed. An old man, one of those weird persons who only emerge from their hiding-places in the great cities for nocturnal rambles, shuffled up presently and seated himself at my side. Before long he made a casual observation regarding the beauty of the night. He spoke very good French, so I concluded that he was not Belgian. I replied in broken French—that of the northern Italian.

I could scarcely see the old fellow's face, and for a time we chatted.

"M'sieur is not French?" he remarked presently.

"No. I come from Turin," was my prompt reply. "I work here in Brussels. I am a clerk."

"I work here, too," the old fellow said with a sigh. "I lost everything in the War. I had a grocery business in Malines, but the Germans—curses be upon them!—wrecked it and killed my wife and two children. So I am alone—alone!" he added in the deep hard voice of blank despair.

A few moments later he struck a match to light his pipe, and then I had an opportunity of getting a glimpse of his face. It was pale and hard-drawn, with dark, deep-set eyes—the countenance of a desperate man.

He remained there for about half-an-hour. Like myself he could see those who came and went from Madame Bracq's, but, of course, he had no interest in them. And at last, with a sigh, he rose, stretched himself, and, wishing me good-night, ambled off in the direction of the Bois.

Ten minutes later the young man, Hymans, accompanied by Fassiaux, left the house, and I rose and went after them. They found a taxi in the Place and drove off, while I followed in another. They alighted at the Café Central, opposite the Bourse, where they seated themselves at one of the little tables on the pavement. At that late hour the place was almost deserted, therefore as I rambled past and turned aimlessly towards the café I had no difficulty in securing a chair near where they sat.

I was, however, unable to overhear their conversation, which was doubtless of a confidential nature.

For a week nothing extraordinary occurred. Young Hymans frequently called upon Madame alone. Once, indeed, they drove in the Bois in Hyman's fine car, but I saw nothing of the widow's husband. He was apparently not in Brussels.

On the next occasion that Madame gave a reunion I witnessed something which greatly increased the mystery. Being still on the alert, watching the arrival of the guests, I saw a taxi pull up before the door, and from it there alighted a sprightly old man dressed in the height of fashion, his open overcoat revealing that he was in evening dress.

The light of the street lamp revealed his face. It was that of the desperate, ragged old man who had sat beside me on that same seat only a week before!

He rang, the door opened, and he entered Madame's house.

I confess I was so astonished that I began to believe my eyes had deceived me.

On that evening when we had sat there together could he also have been watching? Was I suspected, I wondered?

From that moment I ceased to watch Madame's house regularly, but I made the discovery that the old man's name was Seeger, and that he was a close friend of young Hymans. Indeed, during the week-end he was a guest of the young fellow out at the

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Château d'Aye. By this time I had resigned my position in the office of Orpen Frères and spent my time idling about Brussels, ever on the alert for anything which might help to solve the problem upon which I was engaged.

After another week a strange thought suddenly occurred to me, and I left the Gare du Nord one morning and returned to London. There, in a certain room in a certain Government Department at Whitehall, I was handed several albums of photographs of men and women of all classes and all nationalities. With this strange medley I spent an hour.

Next day I returned to Brussels by way of Ostend, still much puzzled, but with more knowledge than I had before possessed. One of those photographs I held in my pocket in order to make certain of the identity.

On the morning of the day following my return all Brussels was startled by the discovery of a mysterious and most brutal crime. The young *valet-de-chambre* at Madame Bracq's, a Norwegian named Jansen, on entering the grand salon to open the curtains that morning, had been horrified at discovering his mistress in the *décolletée* dress she had worn at her reception on the previous evening, stretched upon the carpet with a knife in her breast, while pinned to her corsage was a piece of paper bearing a single word, written in scarlet ink—the word "*Espionne!*"

I confess that when I heard it I stood astounded.

I dashed round to the Avenue Louise and found it in the possession of the police, but, posing as representative of the house-agents, Orpen Frères, I was accorded admission, and thus afforded an opportunity of getting a glimpse of the body as it lay there, the denunciation still pinned upon the corsage of the handsome black and silver gown.

I heard the detectives discussing the crime, for the two medical men had just left. The woman, they felt certain, had been seated alone in a chair near the window when the assassin had crept up and, leaning over her, had struck her a heavy downward blow with the antique Flemish dagger which still remained. I overheard much that caused me to smile inwardly, and I saw that nothing in the room had been disturbed. It remained just as it was when the last guest had departed

Who had been the last guest, the police were asking? Jansen had declared that the last person he let out was a certain Baronne d'Yvoir, who was well known in Brussels society. But I saw that the Brussels police, a most astute organisation, were completely mystified, and naturally. They did not hold the knowledge of the queer circumstances, or of Madame's true *métier*, which I held.

After I had made my observations I left, thanking the commissary of police, and telling him that I would report to my employers.

I only remained in Brussels twenty-four hours longer, for the real fact was that the object of my mission had been to watch and report upon the renewal of German espionage in Belgium. At Whitehall we knew that the good-looking Madame Bracq was none other than the notorious Anna Lippert, who had acted as a German spy in London previous to the war, and had only escaped our contra-espionage by a single day. I was in Brussels in order to watch her activities and her associates, chief of whom was the man who called himself Bolderson, and declared himself to be an Englishman.

On the contrary, this fellow had been born in London of German parents, and was an important official in the spy bureau in the Koeniggrätzerstrasse, while old Fassiaux was also a German agent. The plan of Berlin was to re-establish their spy-centre for Great Britain in Brussels, hence Madame spent lavishly and had attracted a number of Society people. She, however, over-reached herself when she began to flirt with young Jean Hymans, who had fought bravely in the War and had for some time been on King Albert's staff. From what I succeeded in ascertaining later, Hymans had his suspicions aroused, and reported them to the Belgian Government, who, in turn, put on Colleaux, their most famous detective. It was Colleaux who, posing as an old wanderer, had sat with me on the seat in the boulevard on that well-remembered night, and who, in the following week, was, as Monsieur Seeger, one of Madame's guests.

Young Hymans, who had at first fallen in love with the adventuress, now hated her. And when her identity with Anna Lippert was established—the original of the photograph which I carried in my pocket—he took the law in his own hands. He remained behind in secret after all the other guests had left, and with a single blow he rid Belgium of its most dangerous spy, afterwards placing upon the body the paper with "*Espionne*" upon it.

The Belgian Government are now aware of all the facts; but Jean Hymans left the country on the night of his deed.

(Another thrilling story of Claud Heathwaite's adventures will appear next month.)

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How I Would Bring Up a Girl

By
Elinor Glyn.

Illustrated by Gladys Peto.

This is the first of a series of articles by Mrs. Glyn dealing with aspects of modern life. The success or failure of the woman of to-morrow depends on the upbringing of the girl of to-day. Here is a sane, constructive survey of a subject as interesting to the Girl as to her mother.—Ed. R.M.

GIRLS in these days bring up themselves, so to speak, with what results we have yet to determine, however, and all that the most conscientious parent can accomplish is so to train the daughter in her earliest years that she may have some foundation of wisdom to go upon when she reaches the period when she takes the matter into her own hands.

The Jesuits say "give us a boy until he is seven, and afterwards he can go into the world; his training will be accomplished upon the moral side."

And it is during the early years up to twelve that a girl's moral education is the most important.

In the abstract, with a view to the good of the community, the first of two main aims in the education of a girl should be to teach her how she can become an ideal wife and mother. If she should fail to attain these ends (there are so many more women than men in England, alas!), the third should be to equip her with the means to earn her own living, if she belongs to a class where this is necessary. If she does not, the same training may enable her to interest herself in some useful work, because idle creatures of both sexes in these after-war days seem excrescences.

To build up anything you must attend to the foundations, so we shall have to go back to the very beginning of a girl's life if I am to express my views upon how she should be brought up. If the beginnings are bad, then before you can start "bringing up" successfully you have to eliminate past influences, and that requires time, so let us start with the birth of Jane and follow her upwards.

Every mother takes on a huge responsibility by bringing a child into the world, and it is her business at least to be on as high a level as the animals and care for it until it can fend for itself.

Human animals are the only ones at the mercy of imparted knowledge in this respect. All others know the best methods by instinct. Most mothers desire their offspring's happiness and success, though they may not use any sensible method to secure these good things, but just muddle along and hope and leave it to chance; every few years the standard of education and requirements alters and the spirit of the time takes a new turn.

We are not in a very graceful or agreeable period in regard to girls just now, but they are far "better fellows" than they used to be, and have broader minds. Now let us get on with my views, such as they are.

All girls should be encouraged to be as

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attractive and beautiful and sensible as it is possible to be with each particular temperament; and all children should be taught how to think from the day that they can understand words. The law of cause and effect should be explained to them continuously, in the simplest form to begin with and gradually more profoundly, so that they acquire the habit of bringing reason into all their deliberations. Up to the age of twelve this can be accomplished if the mother is clever and sensible—after that the modern Jane will brook no control from her parents. But if children, boys or girls, were as assiduously trained in *right thinking* as they are trained to read and write in the early years, after twelve they would be developed sufficiently on the moral side to be able themselves to discriminate, and to develop their own characters.

As it is, up to twelve they are generally treated as babies, scolded a little, taught a little this and that, indulged in whatever they seem to desire; nothing is very thoroughly explained to them and no personal responsibility is expected of them. The modern idea is to let them develop on their own and express and show character, and that if they are suppressed it will destroy their originality. With this system they arrive at the dangerous age untrained in discipline or resistance, with their minds acting on impulse, with no knowledge of method in thought.

This kind of haphazard bringing-up—although inspired often by love and devotion—is as criminal in my eyes as it would be to send new recruits with no training, without a leader into a fierce battle.

It is the mother's business to observe instincts in infancy; the tiniest baby shows its subconscious mind in its every action, its cries, its tempers, its rippling laughter. Disposition exposes itself from birth. By the time the wee creature is a year old, a careful and thoughtful mother will have ample material to analyse and thus discover what Jane is likely to express of character and temperament later on. Natural character and temperament, I mean, before any outside influence is brought in.

If the mother is in a wordly position where she has been able to have a really good nurse, it will have been waste of her time to interfere with the nurse's business. There are stupid women who think they are being good mothers by fussing over their infants' material wants, when the nurse knows much more about these, in the pitifully mistaken idea that love can teach what it requires years of training and discipline to acquire.

If the mother is not in a worldly position where she can afford a really good nurse, or even a nurse at all, then it is her imperative duty to acquire the knowledge of how to treat an infant, not from relations and neighbours' tales, but from an Infant Welfare Centre, where proper methods will be taught her. And while she is performing a nurse's duties her mind should be taking in the opening flower's tendencies, so that the good ones can

Who does not know the weariness of having to pretend to take interest in the insistent prattling of other people's children?

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The mother should take an interest in all her studies . . . so that in the holidays they can make a *résumé* of all the knowledge Jane has acquired. [*Page 216, col. 2.*]

be encouraged and the bad ones suppressed from the very beginning.

Infants show greed and selfishness, and vanity and temper, and even cunning and spite. And they show gaiety of nature or sulkiness, and generosity and unselfishness as well.

A very good nurse instils cleanliness and tidiness and obedience and self-respect into the infant before it is a year old, so that it learns to curb its temper and perform its little wants decently, and to obey Nanny, and not to snatch its toys when she forbids it. The bad nurse or mother lets it be, pampers it, lets it grow slovenly in habits, and never prevents it from breaking its toys or enforces any obedience. Thus at two years old Jane is a tiresome, naughty little child, who bores everyone except adoring Mummy and Nanny.

Now, let us suppose that the mother is studying the instincts from her side during the time the baby is with her in the day, and the nurse is exercising her judgment at other times; at two Jane will have a good basis to start her life upon and will be intelligent enough to begin to understand elementary instruction in morality; elementary suggestion of how to think; concrete results of cause and effect.

Even at two she will know, if the training has been intelligent, that every single thing she does has some definite following, and her natural sagacity will then suggest to her not to do those things which bring unpleasant consequences.

The discipline of nursery years should be of the firmest and kindest. Once fear enters in deceit is born, whether it was in the original character or not: deceit is the primitive method of self-defence. A strong and fine character would throw it off later in life because no really intelligent person is ever deceitful. For, apart from moral reasons, to imagine that you can successfully deceive others for the length of time that it would require to make the process profitable you would have to be of very poor and limited intellect. You can deceive for a time, but not all the time, and once you are known as a deceiver your prestige and value become nil.

So the greatest care must be taken not to awaken fear at an age when reason cannot analyse things. Reward often, explain always, and punish only in the last resource, are good nursery maxims. So now we have arrived at the time when Jane is learning to read.

There are people who think that this should be left as late as possible, and that children should be allowed to grow as they please, and express themselves without hampering their minds. I am not at all of this opinion. If discipline has to be enforced or relaxed at any period of life I would rather that it were relaxed later than when habits and character are forming.

Intelligent children ought to read quite well at six, and then have the most carefully-chosen books given to them according to their temperaments and capacities. They should never be tired, or forced to learn, and

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all should be made pleasant and interesting in education, but if it is plainly indicated that it is laziness, or contrariness, or stubbornness which is standing in the way, then attention and diligence should be insisted upon. During all this time Jane has had it explained to her that every single thing she is being taught, and every principle which is being inculcated in her is for her own benefit to equip her for success, to make her sweet and beautiful and attractive, to make her clever and to be admired.

The only religion the very young can take in is one of certain reward for good actions and a pride in confidence being reposed in them, and so from this a determination to keep the soul clean and pure arises, and later on religion itself can be inculcated. Jane should be questioned as to what she has observed in her daily walks, and every interest shown in her growing powers of observation, and the simple beginnings of deductive methods of reasoning pointed out to her. This as time goes on must aid and open up the most mediocre mind in a girl.

Absolute obedience to those placed over her, parents, nurse or governess, should be gently enforced. The mother must use her own best judgment in selecting nurse and governess, and frequently investigate herself how things are going on, and if these persons' methods are securing the right results. There is no need for a woman to turn into a drudge, nurse, or governess herself, if she can afford good professionals, but if she cannot it is her duty to supervise and help the child's moral discipline all she can, and the sooner the child can go to school in these circumstances the more time the mother will then be able to spare for spiritual and social training on her return.

If the mother has fulfilled her *rôle* properly, in any class, by the time Jane is ten she will have firmly engrafted in her brain the necessity of truth, the impossibility of deceiving God, and the pride of self-respect. She will thoroughly understand the result of action—I mean that each of her actions *must* produce a result, and that she cannot muddle along, and leave everything to chance. She will have realised that she is only being asked to obey so that she may learn the method, so to speak, of enforcing obedience herself later on, for the same end, to improve and strengthen character, not as a demonstration of power in those grown up.

Every one of her budding tastes will be known to the mother and those likely to bring good strongly encouraged, and all tendencies that are harmful discouraged. She must be able to feel that she will receive sympathy always, but also that she has no right to bore her family or strangers by expressing herself all the time

The wise mother will polish her daughter's wit just as surely as she herself polishe her nails.

Consideration for others should have been instilled from birth.

Jane's education up to ten has been acquired in the most delightful way. Story books of the histories of all countries have been read to her, and discussed, so that she is interested in them and has a general knowledge of contemporary history, however slight; enough to inspire real interest when the period of real study begins.

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Of what use to know English history fairly well if you are perfectly ignorant of what was happening in France and Spain and Italy and other countries at the same time?

Jane will also have learnt a good deal of practical knowledge, and her mother will have taken care that the lessons are made as interesting as possible, and that Jane is encouraged to discuss her own views of the subjects. If the mother is rich enough Jane should have a French maid as well as an English governess in these first years, so that she acquires French as easily as English, which will carry her along even if she shows no talent for other languages later on.

If she has no aptitude for acquiring history or any knowledge, then just absolute necessities had better be drummed into her head while she is at an age when drumming is possible, so that she will not be too ignorant later on to profit by the smattering which is all that that sort of brain would be capable of assimilating. But the Jane I am talking about is intelligent, as a large percentage of girls is nowadays. She has learnt obedience, and the method of thinking, and would never for her own self-respect lie or do mean little things, because her reason has been convinced from earliest years of their futility.

And all this time the mother is watching her progress in mind and body, teaching her to be kind and gentle, tolerant towards others, and severe with herself. Her appearance, and manner of standing and sitting and moving have been looked after. Injurious soaps have not been allowed to spoil her complexion, nor ugly attitudes her shape.

If Jane has brothers she will have been teased out of all affectations and have grown into a "very decent fellow," but care must be taken not to let her become over-athletic and tomboyish, so that she is loud and unattractive.

What is and is not "cricket" must be as profoundly thumped into her as it is into a boy at a good public school; every little feline trick must be noticed and checked, and, above all, gracious manners to everyone of every class must be so inculcated in Jane that she never fails in them. The asset of beautiful manners can never be over-estimated.

So now we arrive at the age of twelve when Jane must begin to study seriously if she wishes to be a well-educated young woman. If this does not seem to be the ambition of her family and she has no special taste for it herself, just to continue acquiring the general education of girls will suffice; but even this will be easier for a naturally stupid one if a method of thought has been taught in the pliant years.

The mother should try and influence Jane in all refined, attractive ways, and if she has been trained to take broad views upon every subject she will only obtain the best knowledge.

Jane, like every other child, has had her phases and fads—her enthusiasms for being a red Indian or a cowboy, her passionate interest in certain characters in her story books. She has gone from one to another, but if her mother has been careful and observant she will have discovered that each one of these phases was started by some inspiration culled from some outside source, such as a pantomime, some book, or some person—in all cases that it is her *imagination* which has been excited, at the time when she is assimilating every impression, bad and good. Therefore it will be patent to the mother that she should only let her come in contact with inspirations which are to her advantage. Indiscriminate going to cinemas and plays, and mixing with other children as companions should be avoided, and the best only selected, but Jane should see the world if possible, and have plenty of companions, only not unsuitable ones.

If she goes to school the mother should take an interest in all her studies, and discuss the points with her in the friendliest spirit of sympathy, so that in the holidays they can make a *résumé* together of all the knowledge Jane has acquired. Schoolgirls are apt to be rough, rowdy creatures, and this the mother must counteract by encouraging an interest in pretty clothes and refined ways in the holidays, and letting Jane always feel that everything at this period of her life is only being used as a means to an end: that she may be an attractive, clever, disciplined woman with high aims, ready when she grows up to take her place in the world without any handicaps.

It is perfectly true that we all have to learn life in the rude and often cruel school of experience, but we should arm our children for this fight as for any other combat.

This Jane and this mother we are talking about are now the best of friends; they have no secrets. The mother has instructed her that life and its necessities all spring from primitive instincts planted in us by God when He created the scheme of things, and that these should be ennobled and only used to the highest ends, but not crushed as sins in themselves or looked upon as thrilling temptations. Every point of Jane's education has been taken in a common-sense, practical way, and all dramatic, emotional

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sides discouraged and hysterical tendencies gently ridiculed and explained away.

But beyond the material side, Jane and her mother discuss spiritual things, and have the purest and loftiest ideals of duty and patriotism, believing that every action must be for the elevation of the soul. I am not on this occasion touching upon any particular form of religion or personal belief, because I want to be of use to those of all religions. And the aim of all beliefs is surely for the elevation of the soul. So we can leave it at that.

Jane from twelve upward should be taught to exercise judgment and use her critical faculties especially, so that her mind becomes quick and ready for all emergencies.

Two girls I knew went to the same school and were taught the same things, and both rose to the top, only one had merely tabloid knowledge which enabled her to pass examinations and no home training of any use to her. The other, having had her critical faculties exercised by her mother in the holidays, and life thoroughly discussed in all its bearings and duties, and her wit polished, and her clothes and manners, and skin, and eyes, and hair, *and nails* attended to, they took very different places when they did come out, though both were of the same social standing.

Jane's mother has let her mix always with quantities of boys and young men friends of her brothers, so that her manners are natural and friendly, but at the same time she is so well taught that her charm and modesty and gentleness remain.

One of the great things I am against in schools, however good they may be, is the senseless custom of keeping the girls too cold, with class-rooms which are so icy that, logically, half the stored energy must be used up in resisting the pain of cold; and practising-rooms where the fingers are stiff from the freezing atmosphere.

All of this has a sort of "survival of the fittest" result, but I wonder how many girls' digestions are impaired, and their livers turned sluggish, and their actual growth stunted, by the misery of cold which those who have not quite perfect circulation, have to endure every winter; just at the period, too, when the most perfect gardening—so to speak—is necessary to bring these flowers to perfection.

No one should be asked to study in an atmosphere which demands any endurance or resistance either of heat or cold, because that is wasting force which should be concentrated upon the subject in hand.

Jane's mother has seen to this, if she is educated at home; and if at school where the idiotic custom obtains, she has given Jane every sort of warm garment.

Schoolgirls' chilblainy hands! Schoolgirls' rough skins and loud voices!—oh, the unattractiveness of such things!

Jane knows the laws of cause and effect too thoroughly to require more than a hint at improvement, even should her own observation have failed to suggest one to her. Jane has learnt never to blame others for anything in regard to herself, because deductive reasoning has taught her that she is entirely responsible for the way others treat her.

Jane, by this method whereby minute explanation of everything she wants to know has been accorded to her, has learnt to read character and judge of new people coming into her life, and has learnt to balance things and keep herself in hand.

Her mind is brilliantly polished, her appearance has been rendered as beautiful as common-sense and good taste can make even an ugly person, and she is joyous and calm and serene. She reads just what books she pleases and discusses them all with "Mum"; she does what she pleases, because her mind is so trained that she herself can decide for the best.

In short, Jane starts upon life, gentle and courteous to all old people, with gracious manners to everyone she comes in contact with, with reserve and self-respect in herself, and the ideal of getting all happiness she can on her way to the attainment of the aim of her life: to be a noble woman.

(Next month Mrs. Glyn describes how she would bring up a boy.)

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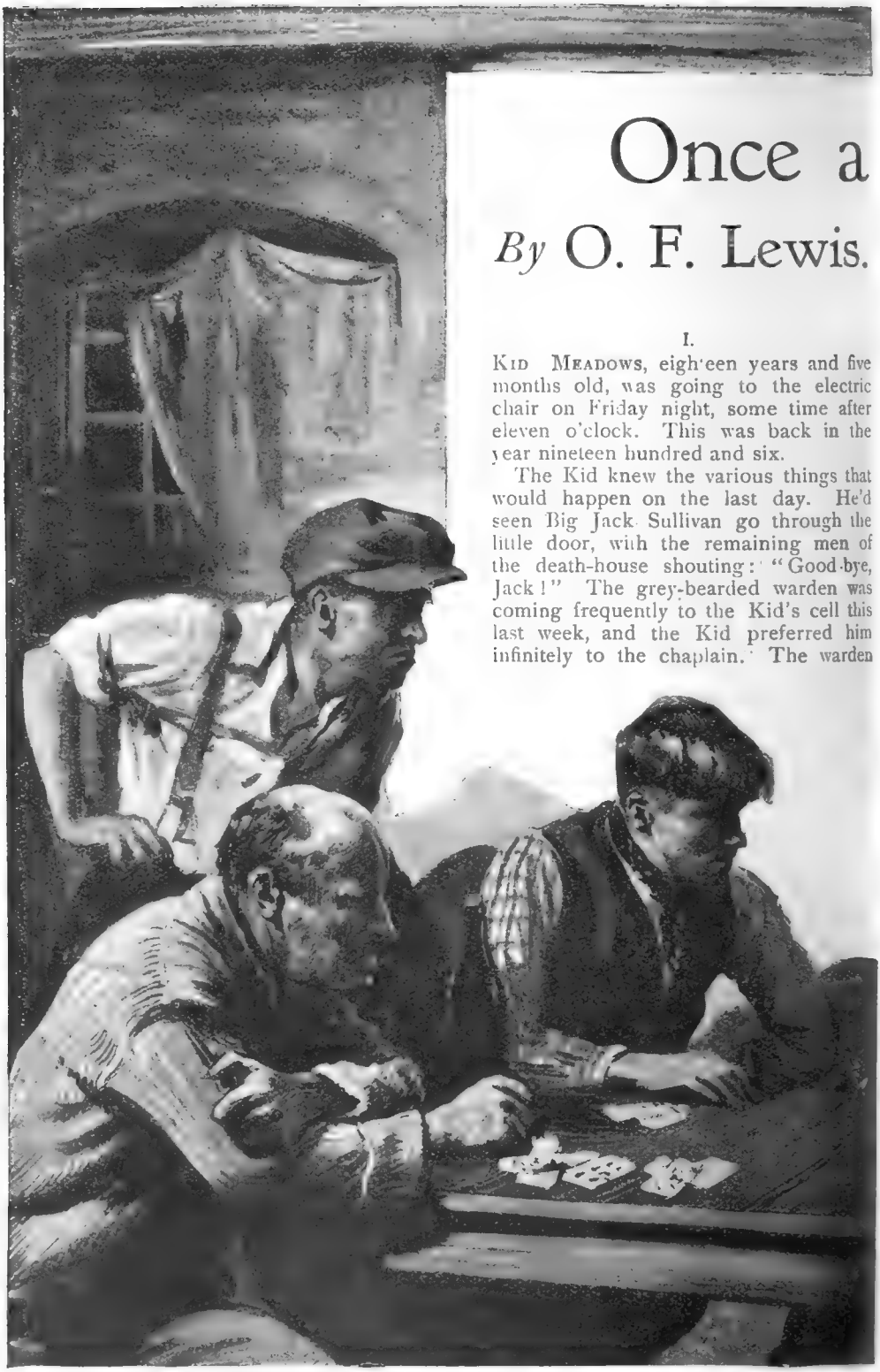

Once a

By O. F. Lewis.

I.

KID MEADOWS, eighteen years and five months old, was going to the electric chair on Friday night, some time after eleven o'clock. This was back in the year nineteen hundred and six.

The Kid knew the various things that would happen on the last day. He'd seen Big Jack Sullivan go through the little door, with the remaining men of the death-house shouting: "Good-bye, Jack!" The grey-bearded warden was coming frequently to the Kid's cell this last week, and the Kid preferred him infinitely to the chaplain. The warden

The Kid . . . entered and stood with his hand on the door-knob. There were three men in the room.—

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Thief—

Illustrated by
E. Verpilleux.

said that lots of women were working for the Kid's reprieve, because of his youth. The Kid laughed hoarsely. "Not because I'm innocent and never had a damned bit of a chance in life?"

With less than twenty-four hours still to go, the Kid began putting his house in order. The banjo, the best thing he had, was to go to Bill Donlan, the third man down the row of cells, and a fellow he'd never seen. He'd played over a hundred games of draughts with him, calling the moves on the numbered black squares. Bill was forever cheerful. "You'll get your reprieve, Kid. 'Course you're innocent!" Bill was the only man in the world the Kid knew of who believed in him.

Bill's case was before the Court of Appeal. "Fine chance I got!" remarked Bill cheerfully one day. "'Course I

—"I'm off the job to-night, boys. Nothing doing! I've changed my mind—that's all!" [Page 221, col. 2]

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croaked the son of a gun! Didn't he steal my wife and kids from me? Ain't he dead? I'm satisfied. We all got to go some time! But the bell ain't rung yet for you, Kid!" This he shouted along the corridor. The guards never let the prisoners see each other, except those whose cells faced. So the Kid had never seen Bill, except in a photograph passed along by the guard.

The Kid was writing a letter when the warden came into the death-house, after one in the morning, announcing his reprieve. The seven men shouted, clattered their furniture, pounded on the tables in their cells. The Kid took it so quietly that the warden said: "Don't you care, Kid?" The Kid answered by crumpling up and slipping gently from the chair to the floor. Hurriedly the guard threw open the cell door and pulled at the collar and shirt of the lad. He was only a young boy, after all.

The warden picked up the sheets of paper on the floor. He went along the corridor and passed them in to Bill Donlan, to whom the first page was addressed. "From the Kid," said the warden.

They took the Kid out to the prison hospital, and the doctor diagnosed it as probably a general collapse. Big Bill Donlan sat in his cell, reading the Kid's letter over and over. Particularly did his eyes retrace several paragraphs: "I didn't do it, honest, Bill. We were all together in the loft when the shot was fired. I never had a chanct, Bill, all my life. Now I got to go without one neither.

"My father was a drunkard, my mother died and I never saw her, and my older sister went wrong. They put me in an orfun asilum, and then afterwards to the ref. You know what that was. When I came out, the other kids from the ref. were waiting for me. They were good thieves, and taut me.

"Bill, when I came out of the ref. the second time, I didn't give a dam for no one, and I don't now. I hope you get your appeal, Bill. You're a white man, and you've done a lot for me in here. You'll be the last thing I'll think of, Bill. You can learn my banjo easy, and there is music that goes with it.

"Good-bye, Bill. I've . . . ."

The Kid seemed to have escaped the chair only to end his brief career in the prison hospital. But when the excruciating weeks of fevered illness were over, the warden stood by his bedside one afternoon and grasped the emaciated hand.

"Kid, you're pardoned! You're innocent. They got a confession out of Boston Mike. You're free!"

The Kid gazed up at the warden out of cavernous eyes. His breath came pantingly.

"How's—how's Bill?"

The warden's eyes were averted quickly, and he stepped back a bit.

The Kid lay, eyes staring at the ceiling, lips trembling, face contorted. Slowly, painfully, he raised himself upon one elbow. The other hand went into the air, fist clenched. Gradually it unclenched, and the long, thin fingers stretched out as if in supplication.

"Curse the chair!"

"He left you a letter, Kid—and a smile—and the banjo!" said the warden gently.

The Kid stared with unseeing eyes at the wall.

II.

In May, 1920, Kid Meadows, then thirty-two years old, sat in Warden Cameron's office at the State prison, the night before he was to go out after five years, three months, and twenty-seven days served for burglary. He was smoking a cigar Cameron had given him.

The Kid shook his head with finality.

"I'm going straight, as I said, Warden, but not because the one way's right and the other wrong. Society never did right to me from the start. I've told you all that. Were those rotten cells at the old prison right, where the water came out of the stone walls and soaked into your back, night after night, every winter? And the cooler, pitch dark—in for a month at a stretch? And the guards that used to throw you into the dungeons, and give you a pint of water every twenty-four hours, and then turn on the taps running outside, when you knocked over your tin cup in the dark, reaching about for it? And when you got out, the people that told the boss that you were an ex-convict?"

The young warden took another tack. "Go straight this time, Kid, because I believe in you!"

"Now you said something!" replied the Kid. "There's other reasons, too. There's altogether too many low-down dogs among what the good people call criminals. They're worse than that! Why, Warden, there's men in here would sell their own mothers, or wives, or sisters, or daughters—straight! I've got my ideas of what honour is, but those fellows! Haven't I run the visiting teams' lockers here at the prison now for two years, through the baseball season? Did you ever hear of a cent's worth of watches or jewellery or tie-pins—anything being missing?"

The young warden rose and extended his hand. "It's eleven o'clock, Kid. I'm giving

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you a letter to a friend of mine that wants an indoor man. I believe in you—for keeps. Go to it, Kid—try it on!"

The Kid started to say something.

"What is it, Kid?"

"Warden, did you ever hear of a Bill Donlan, who got the—the chair back in 1906?"

The warden shook his head. "Why?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing! Only you make me think of him."

III.

Some five months later, about three in the afternoon, the Kid opened softly the door of the parole-agent's room in the office-building at the Capitol. The parole-agent looked up with a smile, nodded to the Kid to seat himself in the chair on the other side of the desk, and went on writing for a moment. The Kid rested one elbow on the desk; he placed his forehead in the palm of his hand. When he finally looked up, the grey-haired parole-agent sat half-tilted back in his office chair, looking at the Kid.

The Kid placed slowly upon the desk a long, black, large-calibred revolver, the pistol pointing at the parole-agent, and the cartridges staring out from their cylindrical barrel.

"It's all off, Mr. Weston," said the Kid, his voice shaking a trifle. "I've come to tell you so. I owe you that much. You've been white. So's the warden. But the gang's got me. The other kind of life's too hard. I've tried it five months. It isn't the hard work. It isn't that I can't earn money. You've banked over a hundred for me. But—well, I'm in on a big jewellery-shop job to-night. So I come to thank you and to say——"

The Kid and the parole-agent talked together for an hour. At one time the parole agent turned the lock on the door and slipped the key in his pocket. While the gun still lay between them, the parole-agent said:

"Meadows, I don't want you to go till you've heard what I've got to say."

Quietly, conversationally, the parole-agent told of man after man he'd known who had come out and had nearly slipped back. Sometimes it was a woman who had saved him, sometimes plain ambition, sometimes the personal touch of a friend, or of the parole-agent or the warden.

A letter slipped through the aperture in the door and fell into the basket. The parole-agent went over, got the letter, opened it, and took from it a five-dollar note. He read the enclosed letter and then handed it to the Kid.

"Meadows," he said, "that's from a sixty-five-year-old crook, with thirty-five years in prison behind him. He's working now in a restaurant at fifteen dollars a week. Read what he says in the last paragraph."

The Kid read aloud: "'Give this note to some other fellow who needs it most. Tell him it's from an old-timer who wishes to God he'd had the chance to go straight in time—like the man who gets this will have.'

"It's yours, Meadows! It don't make any difference how much money you've got in the bank. You're the man now that needs that note most. Understand?"

A half-hour later the Kid climbed a rickety tenement-house stairway and rapped several times, irregularly, at a door. He entered and stood with his hand on the door-knob. There were three men in the room.

"I'm off the job to-night, boys. Nothing doing! I've changed my mind—that's all!"

There were muttered exclamations. Two of the men sprang to their feet. The three men eyed the Kid. He drew his revolver from his pocket and threw it upon the cheap wooden table in the middle of the room.

The men argued with him, expostulated, threatened—to all of which the Kid shook his head.

"I got a couple of friends that's stood by me, and I don't go back on 'em—that's all!"

A meaning glance, and a sneer, passed among the men. Suddenly one of the three placed a gun at the Kid's side. "You squealer!" growled the man. "You don't get out o' here alive!"

The Kid laughed in his face.

"You yellow four-flusher, you haven't the nerve to drop me! What ails all you guys is that you don't dare pull this trick to-night without me. You're sore!" He taunted them, and laughed as he threw up the arm of the man whose revolver was pressing tight against his side. The Kid stepped to the middle of the room.

"I'm going now. If there's to be any shooting, shoot me in the back, when I ain't looking! Then I won't know who did it—see? And what I don't know I can't tell anyone. Only you haven't the nerve, anyway!"

He turned, walked away from them slowly, not looking round. He opened the door, stood for an instant with his back fully exposed, and then shut the door behind him. He walked slowly down the stairs. Not until he reached the street did he hurry. He

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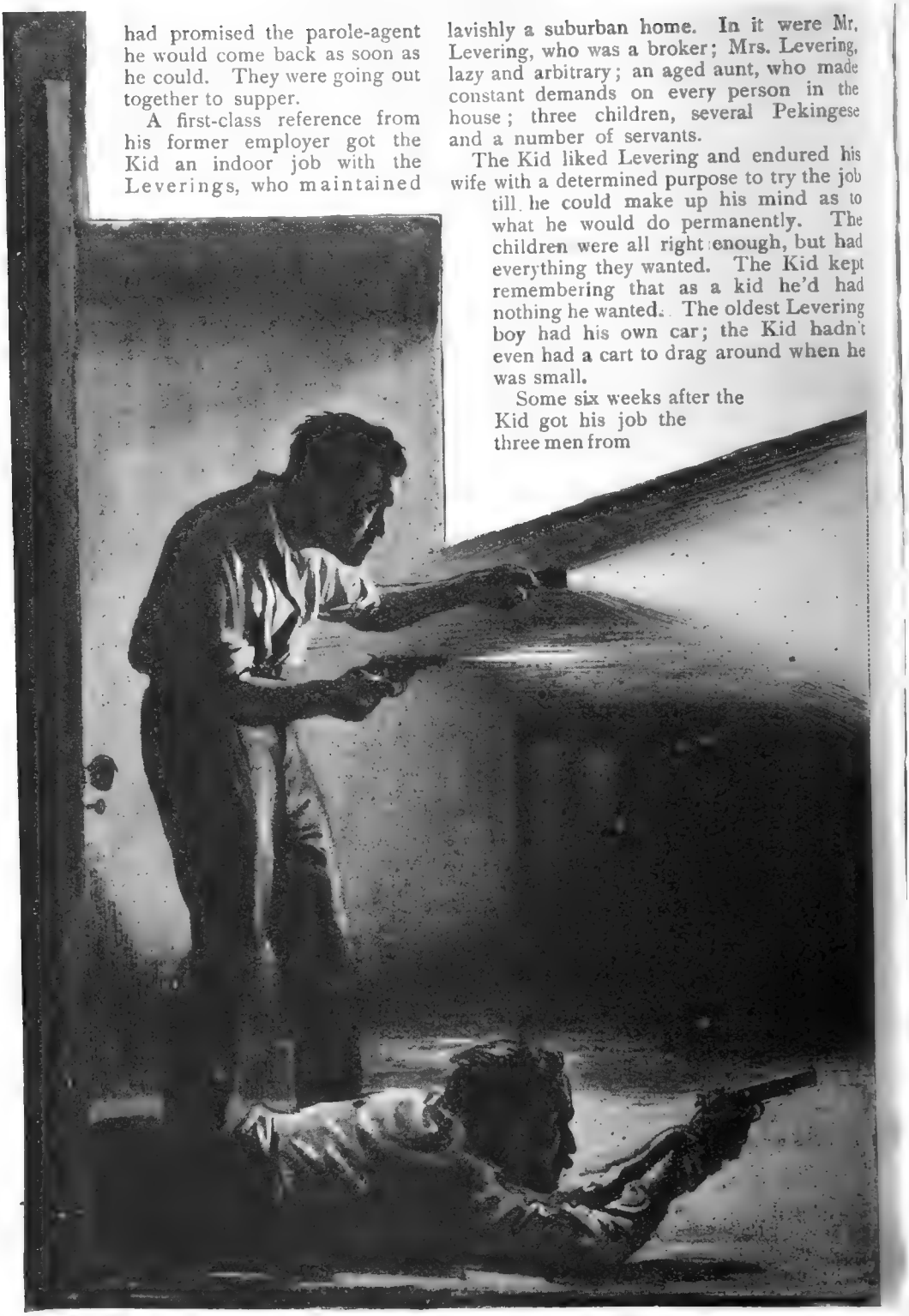
had promised the parole-agent he would come back as soon as he could. They were going out together to supper.

A first-class reference from his former employer got the Kid an indoor job with the Leverings, who maintained lavishly a suburban home. In it were Mr. Levering, who was a broker; Mrs. Levering, lazy and arbitrary; an aged aunt, who made constant demands on every person in the house; three children, several Pekingese and a number of servants.

The Kid liked Levering and endured his wife with a determined purpose to try the job till he could make up his mind as to what he would do permanently. The children were all right enough, but had everything they wanted. The Kid kept remembering that as a kid he'd had nothing he wanted. The oldest Levering boy had his own car; the Kid hadn't even had a cart to drag around when he was small.

Some six weeks after the Kid got his job the three men from



Levering lay prone upon the floor with his pistol extending straight ahead. Suddenly there was a brilliant illumination of the room. . . .

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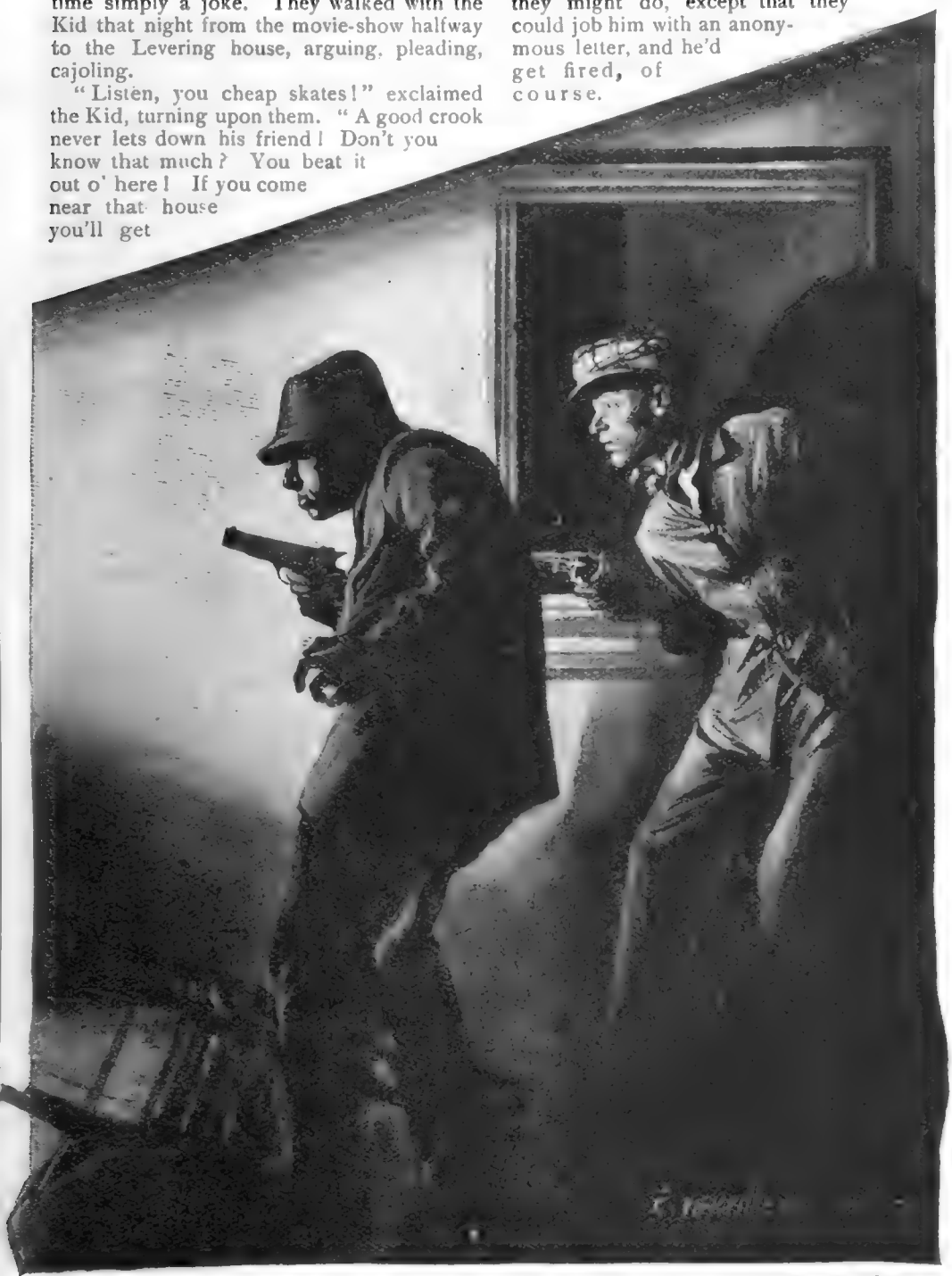
the tenement-house turned up, affecting to treat jovially the affair in the room on the third storey, and called the gun-play at that time simply a joke. They walked with the Kid that night from the movie-show halfway to the Levering house, arguing, pleading, cajoling.

"Listen, you cheap skates!" exclaimed the Kid, turning upon them. "A good crook never lets down his friend! Don't you know that much? You beat it out o' here! If you come near that house you'll get yours! I mean it!" Whereupon the Kid walked briskly away.

He was not specially apprehensive of what they might do, except that they could job him with an anonymous letter, and he'd get fired, of course.



. . . A shot roared reverberatingly at his left. Almost as instantly an answering roar, and flash, from in front of him. [*Page 224, col. 2.*]

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That would be about their size. Or they'd tip off better men than they were as to the wealth in that house.

Nothing happened. The job was a good one, twenty dollars a week and all found, and easy hours. Levering seemed pleased with him. With the passing weeks the Kid believed he'd scared the cheap crooks away for good.

Then one night he was roused from a heavy sleep by someone who shook his arm in the dark. He sprang out of bed. The voice of Levering came to him in a sharp whisper.

"Keep quiet, John! There are burglars down on the first floor. Mrs. Levering is ill. I don't want to rouse anyone—yet. The burglar-alarm buzzed in my room. I've heard them moving around, downstairs. Are you game to go down with me?"

"Game?"

"Game!" repeated Levering. "I've had a letter about you, this last week. I looked you up—know of your record. I'll take a chance on you, all right, John!" Into the hand of the Kid was pressed a short, compact automatic pistol. "That is, if you're coming!"

The Kid was hurriedly drawing on his trousers. He swept aside his boss, gently but firmly. "Let me go first," he said; "you're married—you got children."

They crept through the long hall of the second floor. They listened. No sound. They crept downstairs, the Kid in advance. One light burnt dimly in the wide entrance hall. In Levering's hand was a tiny flash-lamp which he flashed once. "For God's sake," whispered the Kid, "cut that out! In the dark they'd fire at it!"

The Kid was first into the dark dining-room. Close to the wall he crouched, Levering by his side, both listening. They could hear their own breathing—no other sound. Stealthily the Kid crept to the side-board and swept his hand slowly across it. "Most of the silver's gone!" he whispered. He paused, figuring out the next move.

In the basement, below the dining-room, there was a dull thud. "Come!" said the Kid, sharply under his breath. "They're working out through the basement. If we hurry we can head them off."

Down the basement stairs crept the Kid and Levering. It was inky black. "They may be after the liquor!" whispered Levering. The Kid's hand went out and took the flash-lamp from Levering. "They're in the big room," whispered the Kid. "When you get inside the room, go flat on the floor. I'll be beside you. Don't fire till you see the flash of a gun. Then bore it! There's two, and perhaps three men working."

Levering lay prone upon the floor with his pistol extending straight ahead. Suddenly there was a brilliant illumination of the room for an instant, coming from somewhere to his left. The light went out immediately. A shot roared reverberatingly at his left. Almost as instantly an answering roar, and flash, from in front of him. Levering fired at the flash. He heard a shriek, dying away in a moan. Cold chills ran through him.

He felt himself tugged toward the left. He understood. The Kid was shifting their positions before the next shooting. Another flash, and a roar. Levering felt a red-hot poker drawn across his arm. Then there was silence. The Kid's pistol barked out, and there came again an answering flash.

"God!" exclaimed the Kid.

Silence again. Levering wondered what was happening. He touched his stinging arm, and found it was wet. He had been hit! He reached his hand out for the Kid. Was *he*—dead? He had shouted—in pain? He was gone! A fearful thought swept over Levering. He was here in the basement of his own house, at the mercy of these men. Meadows had gone over to the burglars! Levering was trapped! In an instant more the flash-lamp would be trained on him; and then——

Suddenly the sounds of a terrific struggle in the pitch-dark room came to him.

"Don't fire, Mr. Levering! I got him!"

A curse came from a strange, husky, pain-stricken voice. A table overturned. Glass-ware, crockery, crashed to the floor. Levering instinctively rose to his feet and groped for the electric light. Shots rang out—one—two—three—four. A wild yell, a gasp, one final shot, and then quiet save for a low whine, almost like a puppy's moan.

"The flash-lamp's somewhere on the floor, Mr. Levering!"

"Thank God!" said Levering to himself. He found a switch. The light flashed on. The houseman was staggering to his feet. In a pool of blood lay a crumpled form, the face a mass of blood.

"The last one got him for fair," panted the Kid, standing over the body. "Let's look at the other one!"

He went over to the form, prostrate on its face, arms extended. A woman's shriek rang out from the floor above. Levering could hear agonised voices—women's and men's. The Kid turned the silent form over. "I thought so!" he said.

From his own right hand dripped blood. He examined it coolly. "Only scratched!"

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he remarked. Then he caught sight of Levering, staggering dizzily. From his left arm the blood was flowing profusely. The Kid peeled off the man's shirt, tore it into several pieces, and bound them tightly above the nasty wound. The other menservants rushed into the basement room.

IV.

Two weeks later Levering called the Kid into his own private den. Levering's arm was in a sling.

"Meadows," he said, "you're one of the whitest men I ever had the good fortune to know. I'd rather have you at my side in a pinch than anyone I——"

His eyes caught the look in the other man's eyes. Levering stopped. He felt little beads of perspiration gathering on his forehead.

The Kid spoke. "I know what you're going to—got to say, sir. Mrs. Levering and the—old lady won't stand an ex-con. being around, with the children here, and growing up—and the silver and jewellery, I suppose, too." The Kid tried to speak with calmness, but his voice trembled.

"Meadows, women are — different from men—some women. They recognise your bravery, and they want me to—to——. If there's any possible good position I can help you to — I've got mining interests — and you're taken care of anyway for a year, Meadows. I'll see to that. This cheque——"

The Kid pitied the man before him in a way. He shook his head at the outstretched cheque. "My things are packed, sir. I'll be out of the house in fifteen minutes. All I want's my wages. I got the story from the maid this afternoon. She's been throwing it up at me, coming in here under false pretences and taking honest peoples' jobs. I haven't anything against *you*, sir. You're a brave man, sir—but you've got children—that—that have all they want! All I want's my wages. No job! I couldn't take it after all that's—happened!"

Levering held out his hand. The Kid took it. "Any time, anywhere, Meadows, when you change your mind—whatever I can do!"

"You're another man like Bill Donlan," said the Kid to Levering. There didn't seem to be anything more to say. The Kid noticed how clammy the hand of Levering was.

"I'm leaving now, sir," said the Kid.

From the parole-agent in the big city the Kid got the next day the hundred dollars that had been banked for him. That, together with the hundred and seventy-five from Levering, his wages, made nearly three hundred. What the Kid would do he didn't yet know. One thing he did know: once a crook, always a crook! Everywhere in the world there would be Mrs. Leverings and old aunts that thought each convict was a murderer, without honour.

That night in the big city the Kid was met by an old beggar. He recognised him—Chicago Tom, a first-grade dip in his time, now a dud, in and out of country jails. However——

The Kid took him to a restaurant, fed him, took him to his room and listened to the old man's story of his wasted life. It was certainly a tough sight to see an old fool cry the way Chicago Tom did. The Kid gave him five dollars and told him he could flop on the sofa for the night.

The Kid woke late in the morning. Old Tom was gone—and with him the Kid's bank-roll, clothes, suitcase, shoes, everything that was portable. Only the filthy garments of the old man were strewn about the room. The Kid drew on the nondescript clothing and went downstairs.

On the way to a cheap restaurant he bethought himself that he had no money. Carefully he went through the pockets of the dirty garments. In one he found the five-dollar note that he'd given old Tom the night before. He bought a paper on the way to the restaurant.

Down at the foot of the last column of the second page was a brief item two paragraphs long. Red Miller had been released on parole the day before from the State prison. Red Miller, according to the reporter, was reputed one of the cleverest burglars in the East.

The Kid's nose went into the air, as though sniffing the scent of battle. He knew where he could find Red.

The old parole-agent sat in his office at the Capitol, his chair half tilted back, his eyes half closed, thinking. Through the aperture in the door dropped a letter—a letter from the Kid, which the old man read twice over:

> "They gave me life. I'll be over fifty when I come out. The job I did, snatching that paymaster's bag in full daylight, was all bunk. Of course they'd get me. I meant them to. I promised you and the warden to go straight. That's why I'm back here. This is the only place where people will let me go straight. You remember the Leverings?
>
> 'Please come and see me sometime. I got my old job in the locker-house back."

The parole officer rose, took the yellow sheets of paper and dropped them slowly, regretfully, into the wastebasket.

"Better luck next time!" he murmured.

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The Flowering Aloe.

By Dorothy Black.

Illustrated by Howard K. Elcock.

I

Round a bend in the tattered, dusty jungle, and you saw the bungalow at the foot of a slope, on the river bank. It stood in a clump of bamboo, and dirty green aloes grew in straggling fashion around it.

The tired man reined his horse a little and looked round. The bullock carts creaked behind in the jungle, not far off.

"Home again, old girl," he said, slipping to the ground, and patting the mare's wet neck. "And you'll get a good rest before we're off again I'm not going out till the rains break for anyone."

The air was heavy and still. Clouds banked up along the horizon, and now an l again the lightning flashed, and thunder rolled afar off.

"A filthy month—May," he murmured, as he led his horse over a crazy bridge of bamboos into the neglected compound that stood round the bungalow.

It was not a prepossessing house. The windows were draped with dirty white tattered curtains. A wide veranda ran round it, low over the river, and at the foot of the stairs a watchman had suspended his watching in a long sleep.

Carstairs roused him up with his boot.

"Is the Sahib here?" he asked. "Then tell him Carstairs Sahib has come in and wants dinner."

He walked up the veranda steps wearily. There were letters for him on the bamboo table, and he sorted them out without interest. He was dog-tired. What he wanted was a good sleep. It was impossible to rest in the jungle in May. The air was like pea soup.

He went into his room and sat down on the bed. His boys and the carts had not arrived, so the place was in an awful muddle.

He looked round the dirty, cheerless room, with its liberal festoons of cobwebs in the corners and ceiling, and the white man's nightmare came over him suddenly.

"It would be a filthy place to be ill in," he thought. "I wish to Heaven the rains would break. This weather is enough to kill anyone. I shall be all right when the rains break."

Then he heard, out on the veranda, someone singing softly. He stopped, half-wondering if his head were right. It was a woman's voice.

"What the devil—" he said, and peeped gingerly round the curtain that hung over his doorway.

At the far end of the veranda a girl sat sewing by the light of a very bad lamp. She was darning stockings and singing to herself. Rayl Carstairs went back to his room.

"The young cub has got married, and said nothing about it. Of all dirty tricks—and of all the fool's games. The man who brings a woman to this country should be lynched. What place is there for her here? I'll clear out to-morrow. This weather's bad enough, without a woman about the place."

He bathed and changed, in a black temper that made his boy anxious to be gone.

"I'll tell the young fool what I think about him," he said, fumbling clumsily with his clothes. He was half blind with sleep. There were still ten minutes to the usual dinner time, and he sat on his bed for a moment, his head between his hands, and was lost.

It was half-past nine when his boy roused him with, "Dinner ready, sah."

Carstairs cursed him, and got up. His head was heavy as lead, but he knew he'd be ill if he didn't eat. He went out on to the veranda. His shirt was open at the neck, and he wore no tie, and very old duck trousers. It was not the way to appear with a lady in the house. But ladies had no business there, he told himself.

The bad lamp still burnt at the end of

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the veranda. Bats circled round it, and fat moths knocked themselves persistently against its dirty globe. The girl was still sitting there. She got up and laid down her book.

"Good-evening," she said. "You are Mr. Carstairs, I know. I am Ilsa Duke. Bill has gone to the Mill. He'll be back presently. They kept dinner hot for you. I'll come along and see if it's all right."

"Don't bother," he said, rudely enough. "We look after ourselves here."

But she took no notice of him, and passed into the lamp-lit room in front of him. There was something very easy in her manner and bearing. She might almost have been another man for all the embarrassment she seemed to feel in the situation.

There was a change in the room. The tablecloth was clean and evidently new, and there were flowers on the table. The windows had new curtains in them, of some cheap, fresh-coloured material from the bazaar.

He was too tired to talk, and made no effort to. She spoke to the boys outside, and put some ice beside him on the table. Then she went back to her book.

Ice! That was something new, and welcome, anyhow, He wondered why they had never had it before. Of course, you could get ice in the bazaar. That's what came of leaving things to boys. You got nothing and paid through the nose for it.

It seemed a better dinner than usual, too, but he was too tired to enjoy it. He lit his pipe and made for the veranda. Bill had come up the stairs a few minutes before, and he wanted a word with him before turning in.

He heard them talking together in undertones, and paused at the door of the dining-room to re-light his pipe.

"You mustn't mind Carstairs," Bill was saying. "He hates women, and I daresay he'll be rather disagreeable about it all. But we'll live it down."

Rayl Carstairs' sallow face flushed angrily. He hated women all right, but Bill might have remembered he was a gentleman, and would at least endeavour not to show it.

He heard a low laugh, and the rustle of a skirt. When he got out on to the veranda, Bill was alone, negligently lighting a cigarette at the bad lamp.

Bill was a nice youngster, with engaging manners, and, rarer still in that fever-bitten land, a pink complexion.

"Hullo, Rayl, old chap! I say, you do look done up."

"I am," Carstairs said, sinking into the long chair beside the lamp. "The jungle is filthy just now, and I always find this weather trying. I shall be as fit as a fiddle when the rains break. And now, what have you been up to, you young ass?"

"I thought you wouldn't be very pleased, Rayl," the boy said, smiling his most engaging smile at the older man. "But she would come."

"The man who brings a woman to this country, ought to be—"

"Yes, of course he ought, and I quite agree with you. But I didn't bring her—she simply insisted on coming. And Ilsa's not like another woman. Been nursing in France, and making shells, and all the rest of it. She knows what's what, and how to look after herself all right."

There was a pause.

"She won't get in your way at all, Rayl, old man, so buck up," said Bill.

"You're miles too young to go and do such a fool's trick," said Carstairs, "but it's not my business, except that I'm inclined to be fond of you, you silly young ass."

"I don't see it's such a fool's trick," said the boy. "She wanted to come—and a woman in the house makes a tremendous difference. The bazaar has gone down, and the food's a mighty sight better than it was. You'll soon notice the improvement."

"Oh, I daresay that's true enough. But you haven't a princely screw, Bill. And you'll have a flock of kids around you before you know where you are. You young idiots never consider these things, when you plunge blindly into—."

"Good Lord, Rayl, you're miles off the track," said Bill, colouring. "She's my sister. You've never been thinking I'd got spliced without a word? Oh, Lord, I must tell Ilsa that! How she'll roar. Lord, man, she's my sister—and she's got money of her own, so you needn't worry about us. I must go and tell her."

He bolted off down the veranda.

"Bill," shouted Carstairs angrily. "Bill, come here! I'll wring your neck, if you do—"

But his threats were unheeded, and presently shrieks of laughter came from one of the back rooms, proving him defied on the subject.

Carstairs went to bed in a very bad temper.

II.

Burmese lilies bloomed in the parched garden and sickened the air with their heavy scent. The sky hung leaden over them, and in the bazaar the people died like flies, with cholera. Day after day their funerals went

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by, with many tom-toms, and every sign of great rejoicing. Yet the rains did not break.

"We shall have a good old bust up when they do," said Bill, mopping his brow, and reaching his hand out for a cold drink.

Carstairs looked curiously at Ilsa Duke. She was a little white already, and her hair had lost its pretty lustre and lay heavy and dank on her forehead.

He thought:

"It's an ugly country for women," and looked away. He never felt at ease with her. She was so different to the women he had known at home—his own sisters, and their friends. She behaved as though she were another man amongst them. He had not been home for ten years, and this was the new type of woman, he supposed, bred by the war—independent, quite unembarrassed. Too unembarrassed, he thought, by her position. She ran the entire house, including him, and he resented it.

When he returned that morning from his ride round the mills, he found his room had been cleaned and new curtains, of the same fresh-coloured stuff, hung at the windows. The cobwebs had gone, and a little vase on the dressing table contained a white orchid and a sprig of maidenhair.

He meant to mention it to her, but she was so off-hand at breakfast that he was never able to bring the subject up.

"I wish she'd leave my part of the house alone," he thought resentfully. But even as he said it, he revelled in the smell of fresh floor polish and clean soap.

"If the rains don't burst soon, I shall," said Bill.

She was leaning over the veranda rail, and said, apropos of nothing:

"Do those aloes ever flower?"

Bill looked at the dusty trees in the dusty compound below,

"Some liar told me they did," he said. "But I've never seen them. I expect their constitution's undermined by the climate—like old Rayl's."

Ilsa looked over at him, with her frank eyes, and suddenly laughed.

"Bitter aloes," he said. "Like me, I suppose. You're a rude young devil, Bill."

"You look rather like one when you come in from the mills and breakfast's late," said the boy. "Never mind, old Rayl. You may burst into bloom when we least expect it."

Carstairs grunted and turned away. As he did so he saw an old native standing on the veranda steps.

"Now then, Maung Hia, what is it?" he asked sharply. The old man came up the stairs, half double, and mumbled some long tale of woe, handing Carstairs a bundle of very dirty papers. When Carstairs rejoined them on the veranda, the lines round his mouth had deepened.

"Three of the elephants away at Naputaw have broken loose. They think one has been shot. I shall have to go over at once, Bill."

Bill rose and followed him anxiously down the veranda.

"Can't I go instead, Rayl?" he said. "You aren't fit to turn out again so soon, and there's a brute of a storm to break sooner or later."

"I don't much care to turn out now, but it can't be helped," replied Carstairs. "I'm afraid I couldn't let you go, old chap, thanks awfully all the same. I'll take some quinine, and with luck I can ride it in twelve hours and be back some time to-morrow. The rain may hold off till then."

He went to his room, and Bill's anxious voice reached him there. He was saying to his sister:

"Old Rayl isn't fit to turn out. It's too bad. I know he's feeling beastly. He always does this weather."

He was obsessed with a desire to know what reply she made, but her voice was too quiet and he couldn't catch anything. He ordered his horse, and packed a few things together in a light satchel. When he came out again, she was packing his tiffin basket.

"I can't take that," he said. "I'm riding light. It's no good making a great fuss. I shall be back to-morrow, and I'll be able to get something in the villages. They all know me."

She stopped and looked up at him suddenly, a strange expression he had not seen before in her frank eyes.

"You can't go off like that, this weather. It's madness," she said. "Let the cart come after you and bring along your boy and decent food. You never know; you may be kept there."

He flushed suddenly, and stood there, looking dumbly at her. It was very kind of her to think of it all, and suddenly it came into his mind that no woman had ever been kind to him before.

"I don't think I can," he said, presently. "Thanks awfully, all the same. I want to get back quickly, before the storms begin, if I can. I ought to do it in twenty-four hours, with luck."

He stood watching her, feeling vaguely he wanted to say something else. Then:

"Thanks awfully," he said again, clumsily, and went down the veranda steps and mounted his horse A Burmese orderly, riding bareback, went with him.

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He lay at the bottom of the cart, on the damp straw, wrapped in blankets. The rain beat in on them from every side at once. . . . His hot hands found hers, and he lay there holding them, his eyes shut. [*Page 231, col. 1.*]

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When he got to the gates of the dusty compound, he, turned, half hoping to see her again. But she was not looking after him, and he rode with a heavy heart into the jungle.

III.

Ilsa raised herself up on to her elbow, and pulled the mosquito net out of the way.

"Hullo, what is it?" she asked.

Bill stood there, shaking from head to foot.

"The storm's coming," he said, with chattering teeth. "Wake up that swine of a watchman, and make him shut the place up. I've got this beastly malaria again. Always get a go when the rains begin."

She jumped out of bed. In the distance up the river she heard the roar of the approaching storm, and the trees in the compound began to sway and shudder.

A well-aimed inkpot roused the sleeping watchman, and the *chicks* came down with a rush, not a moment too soon. The rain fell with a sudden roar on to the roof, a roar that made talking impossible till its first frenzy had abated.

Ilsa waded through several inches of water into Bill's room, armed with quinine and a hot-water bottle.

"Thanks old girl," he said. "I'll be right as a trivet in two days. Get this every year. So does poor old Rayl. By gosh, think of him riding out in this!"

He looked at his watch.

"He might just have missed it. You never know, in the jungle. These storms dodge about so."

Ilsa crept back over the soaking veranda to her room. Out in the compound the frogs were singing a grace for advent of water, great bull frogs booming like motor cars in the soaking grass, and a thousand grasshoppers, revived by the rain, went off like sewing-machines in the trees.

The rain was coming down in a steady downpour now, and the wind had dropped. She opened her window and leant out into the wet, inky night. The smell of wet earth and heat was like a greenhouse at home.

And he was riding through it all, alone.

Bill was no better, and the country lay under a white mist of driving rain which an invisible sun made warm and steamy. Towards afternoon the Doctor came, and gave him something to make him sleep. Ilsa sat on the veranda outside his door, and battled with legions of mosquitoes. At four o'clock came a message from a tattered and disreputable Burmese boy, and a piece of damp and crumpled paper.

"*Dear Bill. Taken bad in the jungle. Bring along a cart and fetch me in, like a good fellow. Bring some quinine.*"

And Bill lay sleeping off a nice drug, behind the green curtains of his bedroom!

IV.

It was raining now in the jungle, not the restrained, undemonstrative sort of rain of the West, but the turn-a-ditch-into-a-river-in-five-minutes type of rain. Ten yards off the trees were hidden in a thick wall of it. It rattled and roared on the crazy roof of the bullock cart, making conversation impossible, had there been anyone there to talk to.

Ilsa sat inside, keeping as dry as she could. She smiled a little to herself, as she looked down at her rather mongrel costume, combination of a V.A.D's uniform, and her snipe-shooting kit. She had a basket of food, and a bag of Carstairs' stuffed with blankets and rolled in a mackintosh, in vain hopes of keeping it dry.

Hla Bor, withered as an apple, and regardless of the rain, was perched like some large, ancient bird on the front of the cart, and urged on the bullocks with friendly tail pullings, and a form of chastisement we were all familiar with as children administered with the flat of his hand.

Carstairs had said twelve hours' riding would bring him to his headquarters in the Jungle. It took Ilsa sixteen with the bullocks and the rain, and it was the first grey of dawn before the low mat huts and the *bund* encircling the village came in sight.

There was a deafening sound going on; as of falling kettles and beating drums, and Hla Bor looked round and remarked to her casually:

"They play the music, therefore I think the master is surely dead, and flown to oblivion."

Ilsa suddenly felt cold and a little sick. If she should be too late! She leant out of the cart; round the *dak* bungalow squatted a circle of Burmese musicians, working away as only the Burmese musician can, with results that only he can obtain.

She pushed her way unceremoniously through them, and ran up the steps into the dirty bungalow. All was silent. The long, spider-haunted veranda was empty, and the rain dripped in a melancholy fashion from the low roof.

"Where are you?" she called, half frightened at what she might see. There was a sound from one of the dingy rooms, and she went in. Carstairs, or rather his ghost, lay on the floor wrapped in a mackintosh. He raised himself weakly on his elbow.

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"Thank God, Bill. I thought you'd be too late," he said with chattering teeth. "That beast of an orderly ran away, frightened. Why, where's Bill? What's this?"

"Bill's sick," she said shortly. "But you needn't worry. I've got the cart, and I'll take you safely in."

He lay at the bottom of the cart, on the damp straw, wrapped in blankets. The rain beat in on them from every side at once. He slept at first with the medicine she had given him. Then he lay looking at her.

"You ought never to have come," he said. "Bill was mad to let you."

"Bill was asleep," she laughed. "You forget I'm a trained nurse."

"You ought never to have come," he said again.

"Would you rather I hadn't?" she asked, looking away over the sodden landscape.

"I'd probably be dead," he said, suddenly moving nearer and laying his face against her wet dress. His hot hands found hers, and he lay there holding them, his eyes shut.

"I'd probably be dead," he repeated. "It's like heaven now. But you shouldn't have come. I'm not worth it. I suppose it's a dream, and I shall wake up presently, alone in that stinking place."

He pulled her hands down and held their coolness against his hot head. Grey morning had broken over the sodden landscape, and the trees dripped like special rain storms, as the cart creaked and swayed beneath them.

She looked down at him, half-wondering, her eyes very soft.

"Try and sleep, dear," she said softly. "And don't think about anything at all. If it's like that—well you needn't worry. I always cared for you, from the first minute."

She leant over him and kissed his forehead.

V.

Bill sat on the edge of her bed.

"Fancy your bolting off like that for him. I can tell you, Ilsa, old Rayl is frightfully grateful. He's asking every day when you are going to be well enough for him to thank you. He's looking like a preserved ghost, but I've never known him in such good spirits."

Ilsa smiled. She had just had her first introduction to fever—one of the white man's eastern burdens—and her pretty colour had faded, leaving her an almost plain girl.

"Well, I'm getting up to-day," she said. "I'll receive his thanks in person, after tea."

Bill's description of him as a preserved ghost was not half bad, thought Ilsa, as Rayl Carstairs came up the veranda steps and sat down opposite her. His white, haggard face made her heart contract with pity. He seemed oddly embarrassed, too, and she thought quickly:

"Poor dear—it was just loneliness, and the fever, and he thinks he's committed himself. But he needn't be afraid!"

He stumbled through a great many thanks, and inquiries after her health, and after that they launched into a nice discussion upon the beastliness of the weather, and exactly how long their journey had taken, and how much shorter it would have been at any other season, by the other route. And he gave her a full account of the missing elephant, who rejoiced in the name of Sarah, and had been stolen, and would involve them in police inquiries, and law suits and all kinds of annoyance.

"I expect you're tired," he said, getting up. "Bill said I wasn't to stay long. Well, I can't ever thank you enough."

He looked at her in his old, embarrassed way, and then turned stiffly and walked away. She heard his steps going very slowly down the veranda stairway. But presently he was back again. He held out a very small pink flower to her.

"It's the aloe you were asking about," he said. "It's flowered. We thought it never would. I thought you might be interested to see it. It's not much of a flower, is it, but the trees are old—"

His staccato sentences suddenly broke down altogether, and he cried out, almost like a child:

"Ilsa, was it all a dream?"

"No dear," she said softly.

"Oh, thank God!" he whispered, falling on his knees beside her, and hiding his face in her dress.

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The Third Trapeze.

By F. Hadland Davis.

Illustrated by Treyer Evans.

I.

Bantam and Joram's Circus, in the form of a procession of brightly-coloured caravans and cages, rumbled slowly along a West Country lane.

A thin lion was gnawing a bone. He had lost the fierceness of the jungle, and no longer desired to eat the golden head of Madame Joram, a head which had been placed in his mouth hundreds of times to the consternation of many gaping audiences. He was ame and knew it, and, as he blinked his yellow eyes at the dusty hedges, he was painfully aware of the tameness of life as he had been compelled to live it.

There was, however, nothing tame about La Belle Duzanne, Queen of the Ring, and famous for her daring equestrian performance. That good lady always managed to keep up her spirits, though she usually did it at the expense of other people, notably Brown, the Strong Man, who loved her desperately, and the widowed Fat Lady, who hated her no less heartily.

Duzanne had youth and beauty on her side, and she knew how to use both to the best advantage. One day she encouraged the Strong Man, who lost his strength in her gentle hands, and on another day she wouldn't even look at him, but smiled sweetly upon the Clown, who was funny enough in the ring, but horribly depressed when he wasn't on show and adding glory to his professional name of Grimaldi the Second.

Bantam and Brown entered the caravan where Duzanne was sitting smoking a cigarette, her neat, silk-stockinged legs stretched out at full length.

Bantam was in a towering rage, and repeatedly hit his riding-whip against his right gaiter. "We're up against something, I can tell you," said he. "The reputation of our world-famous show is about to totter and fall, and there'll be the very devil to pay if we can't face the odds."

"Oh!" exclaimed Duzanne with mock gravity. "What's the trouble? Is the Fat Lady getting thin?"

"Thin?" roared Bantam. "She's as fat as a prize sow, and costs a fortune to feed; but she's a good draw. People love to see legs and arms like well-stuffed bolsters. No, it ain't the Fat Lady. It's the Strong Man."

The Strong Man shuffled uneasily. He quaked before the pert tongue of Duzanne, and felt his biceps to see if they were still in good condition.

"I suppose Brown's got you to help him out with another proposal," said the Queen of the Ring archly. "If so, it's no go. Nothing doing, old cock. I'm not a marrying kind, as I've told him many times. And if I were the sort of girl that marries, I'd look out for a prince or a poet—something quiet and refined, and not a man who would break my corsets every time he hugged me."

Bantam again made use of his riding-whip. "Look here, Duzanne," he said fiercely, "stow it and let's get to business. You know that our Strong Man takes on anyone who cares to box with him in the towns and villages where we give a show?"

Duzanne nodded.

"Well," continued Bantam, "up to the present Brown has always won hands down—a walk over, mere child's play. But in the town where we shall give a show to-night, and until the end of the week, there's a professional boxer called Bashem."

Duzanne laughed. "Not a bad name," said she, "if he can bash."

"He can," replied Bantam, "and that's where the trouble comes in. I've seen him, a regular bull of a fellow, and so strong that he would have made Samson look silly before he had his hair cut."

"Well?" said Duzanne.

"Don't you see," roared Bantam, "that if

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Bashem boxes with Brown, our Strong Man's reputation is gone for ever?"

"How do you know that Bashem will box?"

"I was told so an hour ago by a man who knows Bashem well. 'Give my love to your Strong Man,' says he, 'and tell him to get a nice beefsteak ready. The steak won't be a bit of good, because when Bashem has done with him, it'll be a case for the undertakers.'"

"Swank!" exclaimed Duzanne. "If I wasn't a woman I'd box Bashem myself and lick him hollow." Then after a pause, and looking steadily at Brown, she added: "As it is, I'll beat Bashem without striking a blow. You're a couple of windy fellows—that's what you are. Now clear out and talk to the Fat Lady."

Bantam cleared out, grumbling as he did so; but the Strong Man lingered behind, fingering his biceps.

"I said clear out," observed Duzanne.

"I know you did," replied Brown meekly, "but I can't. I love you, Duzanne. I've saved a tidy bit, and I want you to become my wife."

"Imposs, old dear. Quite imposs. Besides, you're only a make-believe Strong Man if you get frightened over the loud-mouthed and swaggering Bashem."

"Perhaps I shall knock him out," said Brown with little conviction.

"And perhaps you won't. Leave Bashem to me. I'll settle him."

"You'll settle him? What do you mean, Duzanne?"

"Never mind what I mean. Come here."

The Strong Man advanced, the floor creaking beneath his heavy weight.

"You may kiss me," said Duzanne, "but don't knock my head off."

The Strong Man extended his big hands, held Duzanne's face between his palms, and kissed her full on her painted mouth.

"Now go," said Duzanne, the colour rushing to her cheeks. And the Strong Man walked out of the gay, patchouli-scented caravan feeling as if he could master many Bashems with his little finger.

II.

When the circus tents were up, after the usual procession had passed through the streets with a trailing crowd of sensational advertisements to the sound of brazen trumpets and a well-thumped drum, the Queen of the Ring paid particular attention to her toilette. She put on her most bewitching hat at a rakish angle and fastened some imitation crimson roses in her silk blouse. Having seen that her gloves were immaculate, and that her shoes were immaculate too, she went down the steps of her green, yellow, and red caravan.

The Fat Lady, who had seen the descent of Duzanne from a two-inch slit in her door, now flung it wide open. "Miss Duzanne," she said, "I declare you look positively ravishing; quite a naughty woman!"

"And you," flung back Duzanne, "look like half-a-dozen fat women rolled into one, a cross between a balloon and an elephant. Mind where you stick the pins."

Before the panting Fat Lady could reply to this not over-refined sally, Duzanne had left the circus field and was walking briskly down the High Street.

The girl had not gone far down the principal thoroughfare when she observed a man in a loud check suit, with a red face and a bull-like neck.

The man eyed Duzanne closely, tipped back his check cap, and winked at her, but the Queen of the Ring walked past him with averted gaze. Coming to the conclusion that the fellow was no other than the celebrated Bashem, she slackened her pace, loosened the imitation roses, and let them fall to the ground.

There was no mistaking this signal, and the bull-necked man, who had watched the girl's retreating figure, rushed up to the roses, gripped them firmly, and hurried after Duzanne.

"You've dropped your flowers," said the man.

Duzanne turned round and smiled sweetly. "Thanks so much," she said, taking the roses and pinning them in their place again. "I am sorry to have given you so much trouble."

"No trouble at all. Going to the circus to-night?"

"Yes," said the girl, laughing. "I can't help myself. I'm in it."

"I'm going to liven things up a bit to-night," said the man, chewing a piece of sodden straw. "I'm going to knock the Strong Man into the middle of next fortnight. Says he's never been beaten before. Well, he will be to-night. And Bashem will do it."

"Not if I don't wish it," said Duzanne, squeezing his arm and looking up at him with eyes swimming with emotion.

"Oh, my aunt!" exclaimed the man. "You're a bit of all right, you are! Boxing isn't everything, and if you care to make it worth my while there's no saying I won't touch the Strong Man after all. It depends."

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"Promise me you won't touch him to-night," said the girl eagerly.

"Not to-night. Is the Strong Man a pal of yours?"

"Not to speak of," lied Duzanne sweetly.

"Just a kind of professional desire to keep up the show? Is that it?"

"That's about it."

"Well, it's natural," said Bashem, much relieved to find that nothing had transpired to upset his jealous disposition. "What do you say to a little supper together after to-night's performance?"

"I should like it immensely. But don't call for me in the circus ground. I'll meet you at the Town Hall at eleven o'clock."

"You'll turn up, honest Injun?"

"Honest Injun," said the girl, extending her hand and then hurrying away.

III.

Bashem was in a good humour as he sat down in a reserved seat covered with red bunting. He was prepared to enjoy to the full Messrs. Bantam and Joram's Circus. He smoked a cigar with the band on because it was the kind of cigar that required a band to keep the leaves together.

The orchestra was perspiring profusely as with distended cheeks the musicians blew down dazzlingly-bright instruments. A bald-headed man shot out and withdrew a portion of his trombone with so much vigour that he appeared to be blowing up the tent to double its normal size. There was a strong smell of ammonia and sawdust, while the lively tune the orchestra was playing mingled occasionally with the trumpeting of an elephant, the half-hearted roar of a lion and the piercing cry of a laughing hyæna.

Bantam made an excellent showman. He was all smiles and banter. He could crack a joke as well as he could crack a long whip over the various animals that raced round the arena. His eulogy of the performers he introduced to his "distinguished patrons" was unsurpassed. He was lavish in his praise, and his stock of glowing adjectives never failed him. He watched the show as if he were seeing it for the first time. The masterly way he raised his hand, white with flour, glittering with cheap rings, and stopped the music whenever a performer was risking his or her life, was so dramatic that it thrilled the audience.

There was loud applause when La Belle Duzanne entered the ring, and Bashem clapped his red hands with much enthusiasm. He watched her standing upon the backs of two horses that charged round the arena at great speed. He saw her jump nimbly through a paper-covered hoop, gay with pink bows, and alight on a horse's back as easily as a bee flying to the cup of a honey-loaded flower. There seemed to be nothing La Belle Duzanne could not do with horses. Bashem swelled visibly with pride as he looked at her neat figure clad in a tightly-fitting corsage and short, feathery skirt that showed a wealth of snowy lingerie.

Suddenly the Showman raised his hand. The bandsmen stopped playing with so much precision that they were compelled to deflate their cheeks outside, instead of inside, their instruments, and in doing so looked rather foolish. La Belle Duzanne, so the Showman announced, would give the most daring performance the world had ever seen. Having swung from three trapezia (the Showman said "trapezes"), she would turn a double somersault and alight on a horse travelling at the rate of an express train. It seemed incredible, and that is just what the Showman intended to convey.

Bashem held his breath, while some people in the audience not only held their breath but closed their eyes as well. Bashem's eyes nearly left their sockets as he saw the figure of La Belle Duzanne swing from trapeze to trapeze, her legs close together, her satin shoes, with paste buckles, reflecting the light from the flaring lamps above. When she reached the third trapeze, she uttered a cry so tragic that the audience found its heart in the vicinity of its throat. Something had surely gone wrong, and a terrible accident could not be averted. Bashem rose from his seat, trembling, as he saw La Belle Duzanne let go the bar of the third trapeze. He saw a catherine-wheel of flesh and bone spin round in the air and alight on the horse's back with a bow and a kiss of her hand.

Bashem sat down, too overcome to join in the deafening applause. He took out his handkerchief and wiped his heated forehead. "Good God!" he exclaimed. "What a nerve! What a girl to take out to supper!"

Then the Strong Man appeared. He wore a tiger skin round his loins. It was a real tiger skin that had once belonged to one of Messrs. Bantam and Joram's animals. The Strong Man's arms and legs were knotted with bulging muscles. He tossed cannon-balls into the air as if they had been buns, and caught them in the curve of an arm. The Fat Lady was driven over his abdomen in a wheelbarrow, and, so far from wincing, he seemed to enjoy the experience. He wrestled with mighty weights that dented the ground when he let them fall. A barrel was placed on a table, and four boys sat cross-legged upon it. There was a stout leather

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thong attached to one end, and, bending down, the Strong Man gripped the thong in his teeth, lifted the heavily-loaded barrel and swung it round without losing a tooth and without appearing to be in the least incommoded.

The Showman then came forward, and with his eye nervously fixed on Bashem, announced that the Strong Man was prepared to box with anyone in the audience.

There were cries of "Come on, Bashem." "Now's your chance, Mr. B." "Ten to one on Bashem."

The Strong Man had folded his arms across his hairy chest and did his utmost to appear unmoved; but he was breathing heavily and watching Bashem out of the corner of an eye.

Bashem grew red in the face and gripped the rail before him with both hands. Some one shouted: "Come on, Bashem. The Strong Man's teeth may be better than yours, but you can lick him hollow at boxing." Then followed insinuating remarks that touched Bashem to the quick. He had been called a "coward," and the word stung him to hot anger.

He was about to rise from his seat and go into the ring when he caught a glimpse of La Belle Duzanne. She was shaking her head at him, looking at him in a way that promised well for the supper party. "She's worth it," he said fiercely. Hissing and booing seemed to be shot at him from every corner of the tent. "She s worth anything, but she'll have to pay dearly for Bashem being called a coward!"

Fortunately the situation was relieved by a man leaving the audience and accepting the Strong Man's challenge. The newcomer knew little about boxing and was knocked out in the second round. Bashem watched the fight with ill-concea'ed contempt, and when he saw the Strong Man look at him with victory gleaming in his eyes, Bashem felt he could have jumped into the arena and kicked him.

IV.

Bashem was glad to find himself outside the circus tent. After a stiff whisky he felt better, and walked slowly towards the Town Hall. On reaching that building he paced up and down with increasing restlessness, and the longer he waited the more bitterly he resented the words that had been flung at him in the circus tent. When he pulled out his watch and found it was a quarter-past eleven he exclaimed hotly: "If that woman is making a fool of me I'll——"

He did not finish his remark, for at that moment he saw La Belle Duzanne hurrying towards him. She gripped his hand firmly, and then gave it a playful squeeze as she looked at him with a ravishing and most disconcerting smile.

When they were seated at table Bashem began to thaw as he looked at the girl's red lips and sparkling eyes. "That trapeze show of yours," he said, "was wonderful. Do you always cry out just before you turn the double somersault?"

"Always. It knocks the audience into a devil of a fright."

"I made sure there was going to be an accident."

"Oh, no! I'm proof against accidents. I've never had a fall in my life. I'm dead sure of myself—in everything," and the girl looked closely at her admirer.

"Not in everything," said Bashem. "Look here, Duzanne, it's more than human blood can stand to be called a coward. I tell you I won't stand it. I gave you my word that I wouldn't touch your Strong Man to-night and I kept my promise."

"Yes, you kept your promise, and I thank you with all my heart."

"You thank me with all your heart," repeated Bashem doggedly. "But that's not enough, not by a long chalk. Do you give your last show in this town on Saturday night?"

"Yes," replied the girl quietly.

"Very well. On Saturday night I knock the Strong Man out for the first—and last time." Bashem hung on the final words with unmistakable emphasis.

Duzanne's slender fingers caressed one of Bashem's beefy hands. "For my sake," she said gently, "leave the Strong Man alone. I know you could knock him down and out, but if we are to be pals don't touch him. The defeat of the Strong Man would mean the ruin of the show."

"Not a bit of it! I'd take his place, my beautiful Duzanne, 'pon my word I would, and your show would be twice the draw in consequence."

The girl shook her head.

"There's more in this than meets the eye," said Bashem fiercely. "You don't want the Strong Man to be beaten *because you love him!*"

Duzanne laughed merrily. "The Strong Man has proposed to me a dozen times and I won't have him," she said. "How's that for loving him? I tell you we stick close together in our profession. We may backbite each other outside the ring, but we pull together in the show, and that's the secret of our success."

Bashem seemed a little mollified by this

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"Going to the circus tonight?" "Yes," said the girl, laughing. "I can't help myself. I'm in it."

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speech. "Duzanne," he said presently, "if you'll promise to be my wife, I'll not box the Strong Man."

"I'll think about it," replied Duzanne, smiling.

"I must have your answer now. Yes, or no. Which is it to be?"

"I'll think about it," repeated Duzanne. "I'll let you have my answer on Saturday morning."

Bashem tried all manner of tactics. He bullied and implored by turn. He stumbled from his chair and tried to kiss Duzanne, but the girl evaded him, and finally he was forced to agree to her decision.

When La Belle Duzanne reached her caravan there was a light burning in the Fat Lady's abode. She was not occupied in prayer behind her half-closed door. She was looking stealthily at Duzanne. Secrets of a romantic kind were not hidden from the Fat Lady. She knew which way the wind was blowing, and she had never been so happy as she was that night. She saw clearly the downfall of La Belle Duzanne. The strings of destruction lay in her plump hands, and she appeared to hug those strings to her ample bosom. Her loose lips broke into a smile as she blew out the candle and got into a bed which had been constructed to bear the weight of a mountain.

V

The next day the Fat Lady sought out Bashem. She went to him in a growler, and was heavily veiled. She told him that La Belle Duzanne was making a fool of him. She told him that the Queen of the Ring

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loved the Strong Man, and because of her love for him Duzanne wished to shield Brown from defeat. She watched the effect of her words with a pleasure that cannot be described. She left Bashem in a state of frenzy. His curses were sweet in her ears. She had pulled the strings so well that she saw victory almost within her grasp. Bashem would knock out the Strong Man on Saturday night. He would kill him, and in his death the proud and pretty La Belle Duzanne would be brought to the dust and her lover wrenched from her.

On Saturday morning Duzanne wrote a note to Bashem telling him that she could not entertain his offer of marriage and that her decision was final. Having handed the note to a boy, she sent for the Strong Man.

Brown entered her room with a scowl on his face. "I know your game," he said hotly. "The Fat Lady's told me all. You and Bashem have been pretty thick. You've been making yourself cheap, that's what you've been doing. And you are cheap, as cheap as those shoe-buckles the Clown gave you."

The girl looked at him without a word. There were tears in her eyes and her lips trembled.

"I hear," continued Brown, "that Bashem is to box with me to-night, and I'm glad of it. I also hear—the Fat Lady told me—that you are to marry Bashem. You could hardly do anything else. I tell you, Duzanne, that because you've mocked my love for you, I'll kill your bull-necked lover. I'll fix a piece of sharp steel into my right glove, and I'll press it against his windpipe."

"Hit hard, but play straight," said Duzanne.

"Play straight after you've fooled me and given yourself to Bashem! Not likely!"

Duzanne extended her arms.

"Kiss me," she said softly. "You will forgive all when you know all."

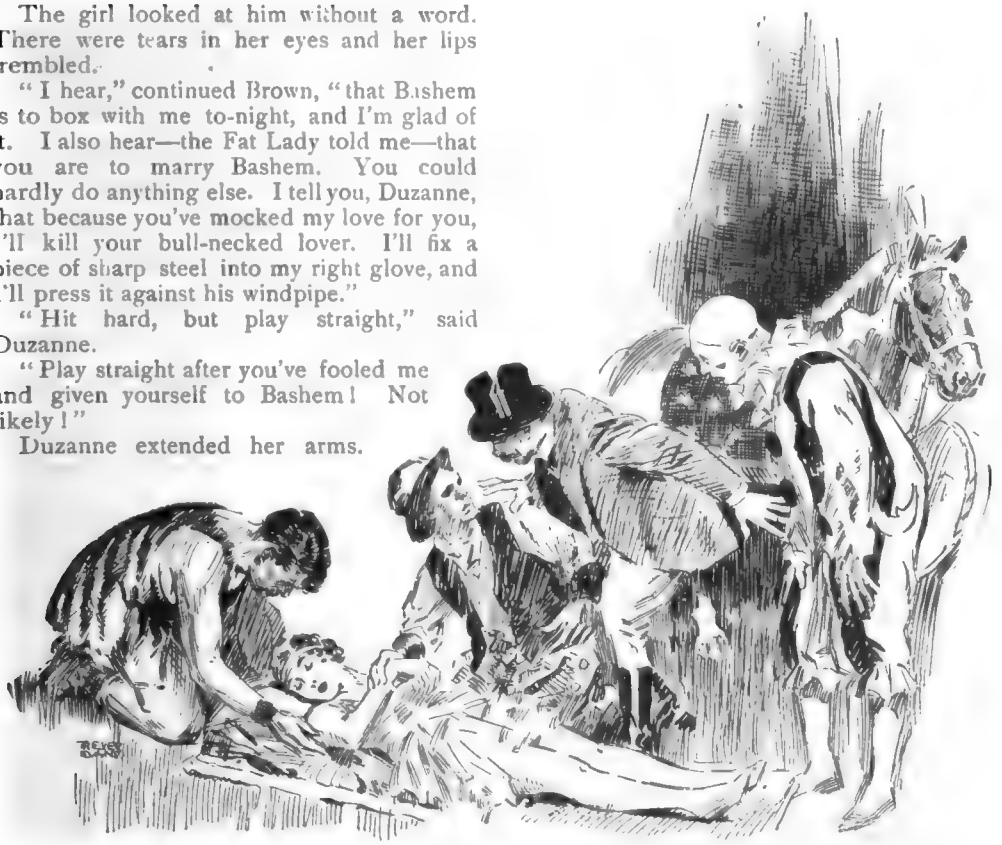
But the Strong Man did not kiss Duzanne. Jealousy rankled in his breast, and he strode out of the room with a curse.

VI.

On Saturday night there was not a vacant seat in the circus tent. All the town knew that Bashem was to box with the Strong Man, and when that gentleman took his seat, opened his heavy overcoat and displayed his scant attire, there were loud cries of "Good old Bashem!"

Bashem felt in excellent form. It was true that La Belle Duzanne had rejected his offer; true, too that she had played with him, but with the Strong Man out of the way, and as a distinguished member of Messrs. Bantam and Joram's Circus, old wounds would heal, and within a year, perhaps sooner, Bashem pictured himself as La Belle Duzanne's husband.

Bashem took no interest in the show until the Queen of the Ring appeared. He



In an annexe adjoining the ring La Belle Duzanne lay smiling bravely. All the members of the company had gathered round a hastily-improvised bed. [*Page 238, col. 1.*]

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watched her every movement with gloating pleasure. He saw her nimbly swarm up a rope and sit negligently upon the bar of a trapeze. He saw her drop with her hands on the bar, and watched the slow, rhythmic movement of her shapely limbs as she increased the swing of her lithe body.

At the third trapeze she uttered the same heart-rending cry he had heard on the first night, but Bashem only smiled at the ruse. Suddenly La Belle Duzanne sprang from the trapeze and turned a double somersault, but instead of alighting on the piebald horse, she fell to the ground, striking her side against an iron staple. She lay quite still in a little pool of blood.

The Strong Man entered the ring and carried Duzanne away. Horrified men and women rose from their seats and left the tent. Only Bashem remained behind, staring wildly at a trapeze that was still swinging.

In an annexe adjoining the ring La Belle Duzanne lay smiling bravely. All the members of the company had gathered round a hastily-improvised bed. The Clown was wringing his hands, the Fat Lady sobbing violently, and Bantam was so distraught that he was rendered speechless.

"You can all clear out except the Strong Man," said Duzanne, still smiling. "It's not going to be an 'East Lynne' death scene, but it's going to be death all the same."

"John," said Duzanne, when she was left alone with the Strong Man, "do you understand now? I did it because I loved you, because I didn't want you to be beaten. I said I would defeat Bashem without striking a blow, and I've done it—done it and played straight."

The Strong Man could not speak. A load had fallen upon him which no earthly arm could lift.

"This is my last show, old dear," said Duzanne softly. "Kiss me. Go on kissing me till I can't feel any more. This is love."

Duzanne did not speak again. Her brave spirit had swung out into the light of another world.

While the Strong Man went on kissing lips that could no longer feel his touch, the Fat Lady outside the tent was asking the Clown how he thought she would look in mourning, and the tame lion gave a feeble roar as he blinked his yellow eyes and gnawed a meatless bone.

THE LONG LANE.

The lane it is rough and the lane it is long
And the boots of the wayfarer need to be strong,
For boulders abound and, though dark be the night,
No lamp-post bestows its convenient light;
Yet I tramp up it nightly and never complain,
For Somebody lives at the end of the lane.

It runs all up-hill and the climbing is steep,
The way it is muddy, the furrows are deep,
And you cannot be sure that the very next stride
Won't end in a puddle disastrously wide;
Yet I climb it each even with hearty goodwill,
For Somebody lives at the top of the hill.

Though not as a rule fond of rough exercise,
I heed not the puddles, the stones I despise,
And down in the valley a long way away
I steadily long for the close of the day,
When I can go tramping for many a mile
To bask in the welcome of Somebody's smile.

Theta.

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Gossamer for Goddesses.

By Robert Magill.

Illustrated by Helen McKie.

I.

As an artist, Edgar Pritchard hated "7's" and "4's." They were crude, mechanical things, and he much preferred the lordly rotundity of an "8" or the subtle curves of a "6." Wherefore he employed an agent to sell his sketches. It was always a matter of wonder to him how Richard Webb, the aforesaid agent, could calculate in his head how much fifteen per cent. of eleven guineas came to. He had tried to do it himself, with a lot of pens and paper, but as he would use curly figures in preference to straight ones, he always got it wrong. He received a cheque from Webb every Friday, spent it by the next Friday, and then went to get another.

The cheque was seldom for more than a ten-pound note or so, although Edgar's sketches sold fairly well as covers for magazines. One week there were not so many figures on the cheque as usual.

Said Webb: "The editor of *Simpson's* would only spring a fiver for that last cover you did. I did my best for you, but, as he said, there's getting to be a good deal of sameness about your work. You want to find something fresh."

Edgar was disagreeably surprised.

"I don't quite follow," said he. The subjects vary enough, don't they?"

"Oh, the ideas are all right," said the agent. "The trouble is that all the sketches seem to be of the same girl. You ought to change your model occasionally."

"I don't use a model," said Edgar. "I do all those faces out of my own head."

"Do you? Well, I'll give you some advice. Find the girl who's put them there, and either murder her, or marry her, so as to get her off your mind. Otherwise you'll be copying wall-papers at eighteenpence an hour before twelve months are out."

Edgar was not a little bit like the usual impression of an artist, with long hair, and an atmosphere of having breakfasted on rose-clouds instead of eggs and bacon. He was short and dapper, neatly dressed, liked pickles, and was a keen motor-cyclist. He went home and looked at some of his latest work. There were girls with red hair and blue eyes, brown hair and hazel eyes, and one atrocity with purple hair and yellow eyes, which he had done as an advertisement for a perfume. But whether they were flappers doing fox-trots, or fur-clad girls on the ice, they were all the same girl, with the same lofty forehead, the same half-humorous smile, and the same firm little mouth.

Edgar pondered. He seemed to know that face somewhere. Those lips appeared as though there were a certain word always trembling on them. Suddenly the word struck him. It was "Poof!" And when she was contemptuous, which was often, Pauline always said: "Poof!"

Pauline Maynard successfully managed a charming and bewildering establishment in the Queen's Road, Bayswater, for the sale of gowns, "confections," and what not. She was a member of the same motor cycling club as Edgar, and, owing to the fact that he sometimes gave her a lift, "pillion," when her own machine was under repair, they were quite good pals. He often dropped into her shop for tea; the tasteful colourings and graceful lines were as good as a week's holiday to him after a day of buses and chimney pots. And once they lunched together.

Said Edgar to himself: "Why, dear me, I must be in love with the girl, and I didn't know it. Old Dicky was right. I'll go round and marry her."

"Madame Pauline" was disengaged to Edgar who was boiling over with enthusiasm like an egg saucepan. He left his cycle propped against the kerb, and found her in the salon at the back of the shop, where only the most exclusive of her patrons were admitted.

"Well, Edgar?" said she. "What do *you* want?"

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"Me? I want to—say, have you ever thought how useful a man would be around the place?"

"A *man?*" she said. "Poof! This is a modiste's, not an ironmonger's. Or do you suggest he should stand outside all day in buttons and drag in possible customers?"

"No, no. You're all wrong. I meant myself."

"You? Has the black-and-white business let you down?"

"Now you're laughing at me as usual, Pauline. I want you to marry me."

She looked at him as though he had uttered a sparkling witticism that demanded reflection, and ought not to be laughed at rudely. Then, seeing that he was serious, she said "Poof!" again in a tone of contempt.

"I mean it, Pauline. What's wrong with the idea? Won't I do?"

"You silly boy," she said, smiling. "Do you think because I am what they call a business woman that I don't want wooing? You sprang a surprise on me."

"Well, will you think it over?"

"It'll want a lot of thinking over, Edgar. Why, you can hardly keep yourself as it is. How on earth do you propose to support a wife? I probably spend more in a year on clothes alone than half your income."

"No, do you, really?" he said, awed. "But we can keep this place on, can't we? I dunno—I suppose I didn't realise. I thought it wouldn't make all that difference."

"No, you men never do realise until a couple of years after marriage what it really means. I'll tell you what, Edgar. You're the first man who's ever had the pluck to want to marry me. They've all of them admired, and then gone away to try somebody easier. You come back and show me that you earn money enough to buy us luxuries—we'll dispense with necessaries until they are cheaper—and I'll tell you the answer then. No—not another word. Let's have some tea."

II.

Edgar went home to his rooms in Bedford Park, locked his door, got a sheet of paper, and made himself out a schedule of work. He was proud of that schedule. It took him two valuable days to do it, and he decorated it with a fanciful border, and threw away a rare Baxter print so that he could frame it and hang it up where it could bully him.

It got him out of bed at seven every morning. During breakfast he was to think out ideas. From nine till one he must do a sketch worth ten pounds; from two till five a smaller one, worth, to be modest, a fiver; and from six till ten was to be spe on borders, tail-pieces, and headings, say another fiver. Ten till twelve every evening was for physical culture, recreation, and so forth. He was afraid to add up what this came to at the end of a year, but if it weren't sufficient, he could always cut out meals and recreation.

The first day he followed it religiously as far as nine o'clock, but it was such a fine, large morning that he put off the schedule till later on, and went out to see how Burnham Beeches looked in the sunshine.

Five days later the agent wrote and asked him whether he intended to do any more work that month; if not, he would probably lose the few commissions he had got. He had been sitting all day fascinated by the schedule. Stung into life once more, he took up the wonderful scheme and did four sketches in one day.

The next fortnight was a nightmare. He got up every morning intending to work hard and make up for the days he had lost, but they had a habit of mounting up so much that he was faced at the end of a week with seven days' work in one.

Eventually he got to working spasmodically. He would sharpen his pencils and prepare paper for a big sketch, then fritter, away the day in doing nothing until evening when he would frantically dash off a sketch in half-an-hour or so, under the necessity of sending out something and getting rid of it.

At the end of a month seven-eighths of these drawings had come back, but he had earned five pounds, apart from his magazine covers. He had got a job to illustrate a serial in the *Girls' Weekly*, which dealt with factory hands. His sketches of the factory, especially the machinery, made the circulation of that paper go up wonderfully, as it was read chiefly by girls of that class, and they had never seen anything like those machines before. Wheels and belts whizzed round without any shafting, for Edgar hated straight lines.

But five pounds was something. He had set himself a task to earn a thousand pounds before he went back to Pauline. Five into a thousand was—two or three hundred. Two or three hundred months was—twenty years or thereabouts. Lord! He imagined himself in twenty years, fat, bald, and short-sighted. And Pauline at the age of forty-two! Forty-two seemed an awful age when viewed from the standpoint of twenty-five. It suggested grey hair, no teeth, thin cheeks, rheumatism and mittens.

Edgar's optimism went off the boil. He went to see the agent.

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Her eyes glued on to it as though it were an original Michael Angelo. "Wherever did you see that evening gown?" she asked. [*Page 242, col 1.*]

"I don't know what it is, old chap," said Webb. "You draw well enough, but the people in your drawings are as lively as cardboard. Look at that scene where the forewoman is refusing to marry the mill-owner. For one thing, she's in evening dress, which is stretching it a little; and for another thing, she might be saying, 'No bread, thank you.' She's not excited enough about it."

"What do you want her to do? Chuck the fire-irons at him?"

"There would be some sense in that. But look here, Edgar; come home and have tea with my wife. She reads all these serials, and she ought to know what the people look like."

Mrs. Webb was a lady built for comfort, not speed, and Edgar made a note of her for his next drawing of the forewoman's mother.

"Ah, yes," she said, when they explained the trouble to her. "You've never had a '*grande passion.*' Your life has been too even. You've had no sorrow. Unless you have felt these things you cannot portray them."

"I don't know so much about that," said Webb. "You can draw a chap who's being run over without lying under a bus yourself. Can't you work up a sorrow, Edgar? What about chilblains?"

"I'm full of sorrow," said Edgar. "It washes against the side when I sit down."

"That's not sorrow; it's liver," said Webb. Then to his wife: "But have a look at some of these sketches, dear."

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They showed her the one where the forewoman was refusing the mill-owner. Her eyes glued on to it as though it were an original Michael Angelo.

"Wherever did you see that evening gown?" she asked.

"I don't think I could have seen it anywhere. I know it's all wrong, but——"

"Wrong? It's marvellous! Do you mean to say that you invented it?"

"I suppose I did," admitted Edgar apologetically.

"But it's wonderful. Could you sketch it again, say, on a figure like mine?"

"I expect so; but I don't know where it would do up, and all that kind of thing, you know. I'm glad you like it."

"Why, any real woman would rave over it. Look at the folds of that corsage, and the artful way the skirt falls away from the waist! Never mind where it does up. I'd rather have it sewn on, than not have it at all. Dick, we'll have this made up in georgette; it won't cost more than fifteen guineas or so, and Harridge's will do it."

"Curse you!" said Webb, feelingly, to Edgar.

"No, don't curse him. He's a real genius. There's not a gown like that in Bond Street."

"Thank God!" said Webb.

III.

Mr. Webb did not mind figures, and he had a head for a bargain. This was not the first time Mrs. Webb had expressed the opinion that a dress was of a good design, but she had never been quite so excited before, and he deduced therefore that it must be something special. Forthwith he took the sketch to Harridge's, telling her that he was going to ask how much it would cost to make up. But instead of going to the gown department, he demanded to see Mr. Harridge himself.

Harridge was busy dictating correspondence to three slaving shorthand writers, who dribbled sheets to three driven typists. Meanwhile he carried on never fewer than two conversations on a like number of telephones on his desk. Travellers, managers, secretaries, dukes, and editors of leading papers were waiting to see him, and he dealt with them as expeditiously as a poor-law official dispensing out-relief. They passed by his desk in a sort of queue. He was a busy man.

When Webb's turn came he wasted no time in talking, but pushed the sketch in front of Harridge's nose. Harridge left off doing all the various things and snorted.

"From Paquin?" he snapped.

"No," said Webb.

"Worth? Liberty? Jenny's?

"None of them," said Webb.

"But it's *new*," said Harridge.

"Quite so," agreed Webb. "Not even a model has been made up yet."

"How much?" said Harridge. "We must have this, and at once. It'll be *the* thing of the season."

And then ensued a bargaining. Harridge swayed a capital of a million pounds, and it was reputed that he had begun to learn his trade by selling second-hand clothes in Charing Cross Road. But Webb acted daily as intermediary between artists and editors, and the mere business man was outclassed. Apart from a cheque for a hundred pounds, which was made payable to Edgar, he demanded, and got, a promise of at least six gowns during the next year, which his wife should choose. Harridge agreed, but stipulated for the address of the artist, and the dirty work was done.

Edgar, in the meantime, was still struggling with his illustrations. The author, in default of anything new in the plot, had introduced a new piece of machinery, into which the heroine pushed the villain and had him squashed to death. That machine was becoming a nightmare to Edgar. He dreamt at night of wheels and pulleys until he thought he should go mad.

One afternoon there was a caller for him. He was an emissary from Harridge's. They offered him five hundred a year to come and design dresses for them. Edgar refused with the air of a captain going down with his ship. He was an artist, not a damned milliner.

The emissary called again in an hour's time and offered six hundred. Edgar ordered him off, and would have set the dog on him, but the dog, being a Pom, was playfully licking the stranger's boots. Every afternoon for a week did somebody call and offer a larger salary, until Harridge grew desperate and called himself. Edgar was honoured. He cut the great man a piece of cake, and waited until he should go, so that he could get back to his conceptions of machinery.

But Harridge was the sort of man who would have made Alexander the Great look like a starting-price bookmaker. One afternoon, as Edgar was returning from a motor-cycle ride, two men approached him outside his door. One tapped him on the shoulder, and said: "We want you to come with us."

"What's up?" said Edgar. "Speed limit, or something?"

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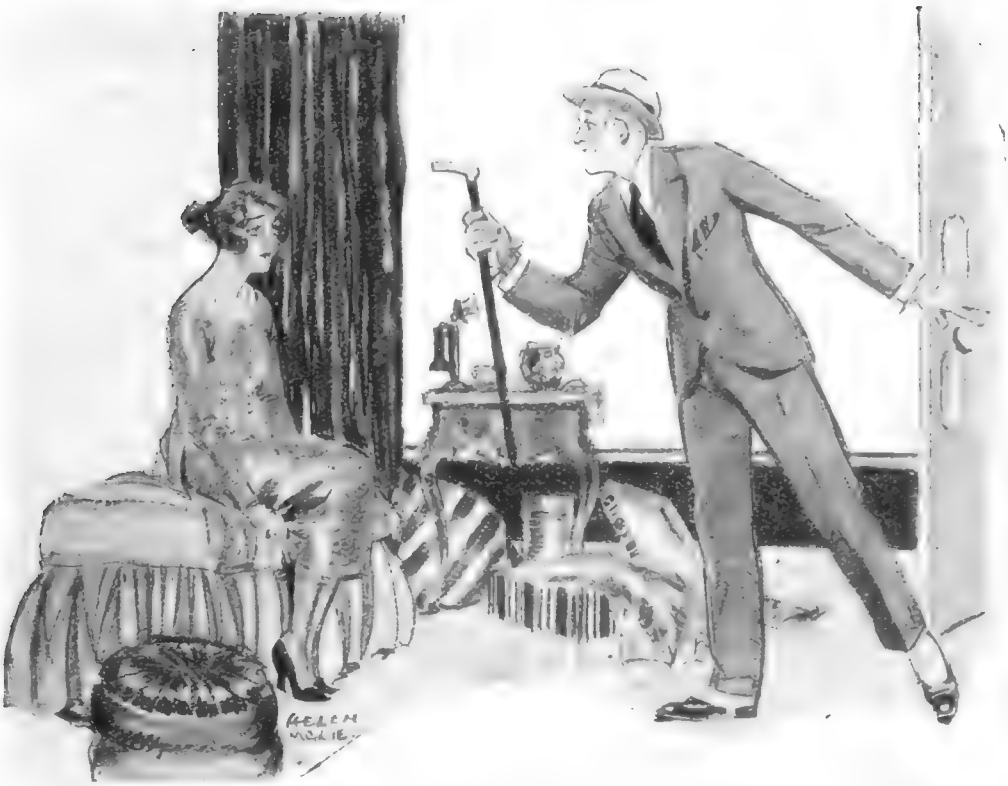

He went back to Pauline. . . . "I know!" he said, bursting in on her. "I'll go and ask old Harridge to lend it to me." [*Page* 244, *col.* 2.]

"As you like," said the man, who was built on large and forbidding lines. "I wasn't told to answer any questions. Get into this car."

Edgar was shown into a sumptuously-furnished room fitted as a studio on the top floor of Harridge's establishment in Duke's Road. Harridge came in and apologised for the abruptness of the proceedings, and told Edgar that he was henceforth engaged as a design creator, and that he was to have twelve hundred a year, whether he liked it or not.

Edgar was touched by the great man's condescension, and he felt that he never would be able to invent that beastly machine. Then they showed him a collection of brushes, paints, and paper that must have cost as much as a small car.

Said he: "I can't design dresses, and I think you're wasting your time. But I'll try; only go away and leave me alone."

They went. The magazines came out with a fresh idea in covers that month, and the serial story about the machines faded out. But Edgar was not a success in his new job. He went and studied the dresses in the salons, he looked at well-dressed women in the parks, and at well-undressed women in the restaurants, but all he could do was to produce some weak and hashed-up mixtures of the old ideas.

He came in at ten regularly, worked hard all day, and went home at six. When he had gone they searched his wastepaper basket for flashes of genius, but all they found were cigarette ends.

Then Harridge, who, as we have said before, was a superman, had an idea. He detailed one of his overworked typists to retype a serial story from the *Daily Gazette*, incidentally turning all the characters into Dukes, Earls, Countesses, Duchesses, and so forth.

Then he took the sheets to Edgar. Said he: "Your designs are quite good, Mr. Pritchard, but we've got enough to last us some time. I'm writing a serial story, and I wish you'd illustrate it as you get time. We might use it as a column advertisement.

Edgar seized the new task like a shipwrecked mariner does his first cigarette. Then he began to produce some really new designs in women's clothing.

Harridge had worked the oracle. Edgar

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drew pictures of women having dinner in gowns that made the mannequins gasp and the hardened shopwalkers go cross-eyed. Harridge's asked for more capital, and extended their business. Such huge crowds collected outside their windows that special police had to be sent to regulate the traffic. As soon as one model was copied by their competitors, they fed Edgar with another instalment of the serial, and, like a goose with a silver lining, he laid them another golden egg.

Edgar went to Harridge one day and told him that he'd got a chance to better himself. Jelfrod's had offered him fifteen hundred a year to go and work for them, and would Mr. Harridge give him a character?

Instead, Harridge gave him a shock by raising his salary to two thousand and talked vaguely of shares in the business. A month later they bought up Jelfrod's bankrupt stock and sold it off cheaply.

IV.

When three months had gone by, Edgar took a day off and went round in his new motor-car, which he had just exchanged for the whole of his first quarter's salary, to see Pauline and swank about how well he was getting on. He wasn't exactly sure why Harridge's paid him such a fine large salary, but there it was, and he was becoming reconciled to the idea. He had on his best clothes, and was dressed expensively, yet tastefully, and his one signet-ring was neat, yet not gaudy, like the National Anthem.

Pauline was in. So also was a gentleman who was sitting in the front shop smoking a briar pipe. Edgar disliked him instinctively; he bore a striking resemblance to the man who had practically abducted him in the big car. He found Pauline in the salon, looking very gloomy, as though she had just been struggling unsuccessfully with a fit of tears.

"Whatever's wrong?" said Edgar. "Who's the feller in the shop?"

"He's what's wrong," said Pauline. "He's a bailiff."

"A bailiff?" echoed Edgar.

"Oh, poof!" said Pauline. "I said a bailiff, didn't I? Did you think he came in to try on a dress?"

"Poor old girl!" said Edgar. "How much is it? I thought you were doing so well."

"I was," said Pauline, "until most of my clients went elsewhere. He wants twenty-four pounds ten. They know I can't go bankrupt, or it would bust me, and I shall have to let them have these dresses here at a ridiculous price to pay the debt."

Edgar, the knight-errant, waited for no more. He went straight round into the Edgware Road and tried to pawn his ring.

"How much?" said the bored assistant.

"Twenty-five," said Edgar, trying to appear businesslike, and meaning pounds.

"Right," said the other, and handed him the ticket, one Bradbury, and four-and-elevenpence.

Edgar was too taken aback to argue. He went back to Pauline, and on the way he had an idea.

"I know!" he said, bursting in on her. "I'll go and ask old Harridge to lend it to me. He's a good sort, although he does talk in shorthand."

"Harridge!" she said. "Why, it's they who've put the brokers in for material I've had on credit! What do you know about them?"

"Me? I work there."

"You work there! What do you do?"

"Oh, sketch things. I illustrate a serial story for old Harridge as much as anything else."

Pauline added two and two together, and they made a lot more than four.

"I thought some of those designs were reminiscent," she said. "It's your drawings. So you are the man who's got all the women in London waiting in a queue as far as Marble Arch! *You've* been taking the bread out of my mouth! You've—— Oh, Edgar——!"

* * * * *

When Mr. and Mrs. Pritchard went into partnership as "Madame Pauline et Cie," the queue of clothes-hungry women was as large as before, but the goal was a little farther up Duke's Road. Edgar wouldn't face Harridge to give him a week's notice. Said he: "He'll shove me into the deepest dungeon under the tube if he sees me again. I'll write."

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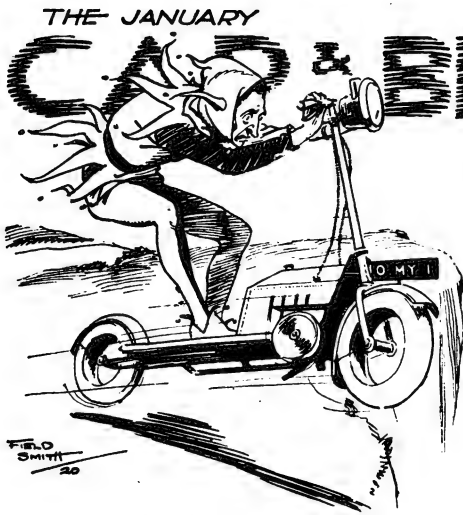

LUCKY BILL!

FIRST COSTER: "Well, poor old Bill's gone!"

SECOND COSTER (scornfully): "Poor, indeed! Luckiest bloke in the market. Couldn't touch nuffink wifout it turned to money. Insured 'is 'ouse—burnt in a month. Insured 'isself again' haccidents—broke 'is harm first week. Joined the Burial Sercicty last Toosday, and now 'e's 'opped it. I call it luck."

A HEAD FOR FIGURES.

An amusing story is told in regard to a well-known actor.

He was recently playing a round of golf with an acquaintance, and at the end of the game the latter began to reckon up their respective scores.

"Good heavens," said the actor, "you don't mean to say you have been keeping the scores?"

"Certainly," was the reply. "I'm 92 and you are 127."

"All right," was the admiring retort, "but you're not a golfer. You're a chartered accountant."

A KNOCK-DOWN BLOW.

Bill, the Boy Battler of Bermondsey, got in the way of a little two-seater. His thirteen stone caught the full impact of the tiny car, and Bill "took the count."

When he came round he looked for the cause of the trouble.

"Wot did that?" he asked.

"My car," said the owner.

"Your wot?" said Bill, with deep disgust. "Lumme! Fancy me—*me*—being knocked aht by a roller skate!"

THE SNUB DIRECT.

A member of a Bohemian club had been recently knighted. When he returned to the club someone asked him where he had been.

"Stopping at my ancestral home," he said.

"What do you call your ancestral home?" asked the other member.

"Queenbury Court," replied the man with emphasis.

"Of course," said his friend, "we all know that, but what number?"

A WEIGHTY MATTER.

MR. CLOSE: "I'm sure your butcher gives you short weight for your money."

MRS. CLOSE: "But consider, my dear, the long wait you give him for his."

Aunt Jane's long skirts and low shoes save leather and waste wool.

Her niece's short skirts and high boots save wool and waste leather.

The flapper's short skirts and low shoes save both wool and leather.

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A KNIGHT IN KNICKERBOCKERS.

NO CAUSE FOR COMPLAINT.

"Look here!" exclaimed the stranger, as he tumbled into his twentieth puddle, "I thought you said you knew where all the bad places were on this road?"

"Well," replied the native, who had volunteered to guide him through the dark, "we're a-finding them, ain't we?"

THE FIGHTING CHANCE.

The prison visitor was going her rounds.

"Have you ever struggled against the consequences of temptation?" she inquired of one ferocious-looking fellow.

"Yes, ma'am, I have," he answered.

"Ah! I suppose if you had fought just a little harder you wouldn't be here to-day?"

"Well, ma'am," said the prisoner modestly, "I did the best I could. It took five policemen to get me to the station!"

TOTAL IMMERSION!

O'Halloran rushed up to a cabin in Connemara shouting: "Lend me a spade! Lend me a spade!"

"What for?" asked the owner of the cabin.

"To dig my friend out of the bog," replied O'Halloran. "He's just fallen in and he's up to his ankles!"

"Up to his ankles!" retorted the other. "Then you don't need a spade. I'll lend you a rope."

"Begorrah, but a rope's no good," replied the rescuer. "He couldn't catch howld of it!"

"Why not?"

"For several reasons," replied O'Halloran; "but the chief one is that he went in head-first."

HANDY WITH THE CUE.

A letter of introduction was handed by an actor to a manager. It described the presenter as an actor of much merit, and concluded:

"He plays Macbeth, Hamlet, Shylock, and billiards. He plays billiards best."

SOMEWHERE IN EUROPE.

As the powerful motor-car dashed along the French country road in a smother of dust and fumes, the owner leant towards the chauffeur and yelled out:

"Where are we now?"

"Just running into Paris, sir," roared back the man at the wheel.

The owner of the car shook his head irritably.

"Oh, don't bother about details," he shouted back. "I mean, what country?"

A BAD BARGAIN.

SHE: "I see no sense in a man's marrying and then spending all his time at the club."
CYNIC: "Leave out the club part, dear, and there's still no sense in it."

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"ALL THE WORLD LOVES A LOVER—"

An Idyll of a Furniture Shop.

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A FATAL PRACTICE.

"I should think that you would get tired of going motoring alone."

"Oh, I usually run across somebody before I've gone far."

"NUMBER, PLEASE!"

The doctor had been to examine Mabel, and in the course of his examination had used a stethoscope. Little Marie, who was in the room, was very interested.

"I say, doctor," she said shyly, as the medical man was leaving, "when you telephoned to Mabel did she answer you?"

A FREE SHOW.

"Ruth," said the teacher of a juvenile class, "what is the difference between electricity and lightning?"

"You don't have to pay nothing for lightning," came the prompt reply.

BOUND TO FOLLOW.

They had just become engaged.

"I shall love," she cooed, "to share all your griefs and troubles."

"But, darling," he purred, "I have none."

"No," she agreed; "but I mean when we are married."

PUSSY WANTS TO PLAY!

"Cock, have you any mice in the kitchen?"
"Lor', yes, Miss Joan."
"Then will you please lend me one for my kitten?"

FOOTBALL AGAIN.

With his face bearing an expression of resigned sorrow, the clerk faced his employer.

"May I have a half-day off to-morrow, sir?" he asked sadly.

"What for?" snapped the great man.

"Well, sir, my dear old grandmother, who has been ailing for some time, passed away a day or two ago, and—er——"

His voice died dolefully away. The chief was touched by the sight of his grief.

"Ah, I'm sorry to hear it!" he murmured gently. "And you naturally want to be present at the final ceremony?"

"No, sir," replied the clerk, with sudden absence of mind; "not the final. It's only the semi-final to-morrow."

ON VIEW DAILY.

IMPERTINENT MALE (in the Park): "It seems to me I've seen your face somewhere else."

FLAPPER: "I shouldn't wonder. This isn't the first time I've taken it out."

"FEED THE BRUTE!"

It was washing day, but Bridget did not seem to be getting on very fast. So down went her mistress to investigate, only to find Bridget's favourite policeman regaling himself with the remains of last night's dinner. Looking at her erring servant, the mistress demanded angrily:

"What are you supposed to be doing?"

"Filling up the copper, ma'am," was the calm reply.

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Do You Want to Be a Hundred?

By F. A. M. Webster.

On the eve of a New Year it is not uninteresting to pause and take stock of life. Do we really enjoy it, should we like it to endure for a hundred years, or is life frankly wearisome? And if wearisome does the fault lie with life or ourselves? This sane, thoughtful article may very well help us to achieve the art of joyous living.—Ed. R.M.

Most people if asked if they would like to attain the age of a hundred years would, I believe, unhesitatingly and most emphatically answer "No," simply because they realise that in most cases the "Lamp of Youth" will be utterly out before that age is reached. But suppose the question is altered to "Do you want to be a hundred *and keep your youth?*" then, surely, a decidedly affirmative answer would be given.

It is in the Greek tragedy, *Phædra*, I believe, that Sophocles asserts that "those whom the gods love die young," a saying much quoted, and as often mis-interpreted, of late years. When the great author wrote those words, it was not physical death he had in mind, but rather the early death of youth in the mentality of the worldly-wise as opposed to the retention of clean ideals and high courage in the hearts of those by the gods beloved.

Youth and its Ideals.

Youth, intended to be immortal, is for most of us but a fleeting period of brief, care-free pleasure and bodily well-being, which might yet be prolonged almost to the end of our days had we but the will-power and disposition to hold this greatest of all gifts, upon which depend the happiness and progress of the world.

The texture of youth is something as fragile as the downy feathers fringing a dove's wings; the inculcation of wrong principles in the mind of a child soon destroys the gossamer fabric, the rude hands of the world rend it all too quickly when the seclusion of school is passed and the battle of life begun.

It has been argued many times that idealism is valueless in the affairs of the world. Idealism has no current value in the great cities where commerce alone holds sway and every man is fighting for his own hand. And yet it is the preservation of ideals through the passing years that keeps the "old boy" of seventy as interested in life and as happy as his grandson in the heedless twenties.

While maintaining that there is no reason why the mental faculties and the cheerful outlook of youth should not be preserved unimpaired until Death puts a period to the ripest old age, it must be admitted that the decay of the physical body is inevitable. The tissues, muscle substances and blood-carrying vessels all deteriorate in the course of time, but such deterioration may be greatly retarded and the ultimate enfeeblement of the human frame postponed by a sane system of recreative exercises and rest.

Women are, I think, more afraid of long life than men, simply because their period of youth is shorter and the beauty, which they wrongly regard as their greatest asset, fades all too quickly.

Cultivate Charm.

The physical beauty of face and figure might be preserved much longer than is usually the case if women would prefer exercise and common-sense to the use of cosmetics, but most of them seem to find the hare-foot and powder-puff very much less tiresome than half-an-hour devoted daily to such physical exercises as would preserve their beauty.

But, when all is said and done, charm is a great deal more important than mere beauty, and charm is surely attributable to a youthful mentality and an infinite capacity for sympathetic understanding?

A woman may be as plain as the Sphinx, or as old as Methuselah, but she will still be able to command her little *coterie* of courtiers as long as she preserves her charm of manner

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and refuses to allow age to make her fussy and querulous.

If it is true that, physically, men and women are as old as their arteries, it is equally true that, mentally, they are as old as their outlook upon life.

Dealing first with the physical side of the matter, one is struck by the frequency with which men, previously perfectly healthy and apparently likely to last for years, break up and die upon retiring from their lifelong occupations; this is particularly true of those who are in sedentary employment.

The reason for the sudden collapse is not far to seek.

All Work and No Play.

Years of work, the mental strain of which has left the worker too tired to enjoy a spell of healthy exercise at the end of the day, which provides no exercise of itself, have enfeebled his system, but while the work has continued day by day, year in year out, his mind has been too fully occupied thinking for himself to worry about himself; but with no work to do and, in all probability, no hobby of a healthily recreative nature to fall back upon, he realises that, for him, life is almost finished, that there is only the "smell of the lamp" to subsist upon, in fact. He is a little frightened at first and nervous about his flagging vitality; then suddenly he grows very tired, releases his grip upon life, and slides quietly into death.

There is another type of man, however, who neither makes work his fetish nor gold his god, but works and plays in proportion, honestly and enough to secure his own livelihood and his dependents' future, and so continues to keep his body healthy and his outlook upon life sane. In consequence the play which he has not neglected provides him with an admirable occupation when working days are done, for he is then able to devote his hitherto divided attention to that hobby which has stood him in such good stead, and it may well be that such an one will live out his length of days, even to the hundred years, happily and in bodily well-being, because his interest in life is retained to the very end.

The Value of Sport.

Another circumstance which strikes the observant student of humanity with considerable force is the, not infrequent, rapid deterioration of the first-class athlete, or player of games, after the period of active participation in sport is passed.

It has been my lot to meet and talk with very many athletes, both during and long after the heyday of their athletic prime, and I can safely say that I have yet to meet a single old athlete, or player of games, who, having had a sound heart during his active years and who led a clean and sensible life after becoming "a looker-on," had very much to complain of, so far as his physical well-being was concerned. But, on the other hand, I know hundreds of men who were weakly boys who admit frankly that they owe their present good health to the games they were made to play at school, and subsequently kept up of their own volition.

Keep Up Your Recreations.

The principal danger which all players of games must face, and which leads to the rapid deterioration referred to above, is that of abandoning a game too suddenly, for various causes, such as getting married, for most women insist that their husbands shall give up the Saturday afternoon cricket, football, or hockey match; but a man so doing should at least play golf or tennis or take up walking or cycling, in all of which recreations his wife can join.

Apart from the foregoing general considerations I should name cleanliness as a prime aid to longevity. At this stage I think I hear my readers say: "What rot! Of course every decent man and woman is clean!" And, certainly, I agree, so far as appearances go, but all exercise, even running to catch a 'bus, induces perspiration, in a great or lesser degree according to the amount of exertion and the condition of the person, and perspiration left upon the surface of the skin clogs the pores with deleterious, dead matter, to the ultimate detriment of the whole system.

Again, exertion, no matter how slight, causes a certain amount of wear-and-tear which induces fatigue, due to the depositing of the waste products of such exertion in the muscle substance. These products are poisonous and, if retained in the substance, do harm, but rubbing removes them quickly and without putting an undue strain upon the blood-carrying vessels, which is important, since a man is no older than his arteries.

Get Rid of Impurities.

For the foregoing reasons, I am a great advocate of the early morning bath, which removes impurities from the surface of the skin, followed by a brisk rub-down with a rough towel, which stimulates the circulation of the blood and assists in the carrying away of the waste products of exertion that are deposited in the muscle substance each day.

Such matters as breathing and calisthenic

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exercises are of the utmost importance now-a-days, when so many men and women spend the whole of their working hours seated at desk or table.

The Case of the Sedentary Worker.

A person forced to occupy a sitting position for any length of time inevitably allows his shoulders to droop forward so that the chest becomes contracted; the breaths taken are short, and a deep inspiration seldom fills the lungs. The natural consequence is that the blood, which is not properly oxygenated becomes sluggish and the heart does not receive its proper amount of nourishment.

At night the sleeper slowly inhales and exhales deep breaths which help to clear from his lungs the impurities of smoke, etc., he has collected during the day; this process is further aided by sleeping with the window open, but, even so, the evil taste of the exhaled impurities is often present in the mouth when the early morning tea arrives. The deep breathing exercises go far to effect a cure and, if the calisthenic exercises are properly practised, the musculature will improve and there will be less inclination to lounge at the desk with the chest contracted and the breathing half stifled.

The question of diet is too vast to deal with, nor do I think that it can be discussed profitably, for there are so many diverse opinions upon the matter, but surely common-sense should be our guide and good, wholesome food in moderation preferred to fancy dishes or overloading the digestive organs?

And yet with it all I have known men and women, splendid athletes and abundantly healthy, who did not last over long and were never contented, simply because they did not understand the vital truth contained in the age-old tag "*Mens sana in corpore sano.*"

A Healthy Mind in a Healthy Body.

A healthy mind is just as essential as a healthy body to the attainment of happy longevity, and, in this age of slack morals and emancipation, I am not sure that a clean mind is not the harder of the two attributes to preserve. There is a subtle menace to cleanliness in so many things now-a-days.

Neither wild horses nor red-hot pincers could make me advocate a return to the shams and shibboleths of the Victorian era, but one cannot forget that our women have gained their freedom with a rush, and although they have proved their right thereto, up to the hilt, I cannot help feeling that there are times when they might find "discretion the better part of valour," both in candour of speech and costume.

The cataclysmic upheaval which for five years shook the world, has borne men and women off their feet, and we are now beginning to feel fresh ground upon which we must establish new relations between the sexes. These relations will prevail for untold generations, for we are re-fashioning the world. The war found us, to a very great extent, a C_3 people physically; it remains for us to prove, in peace, that we are, mentally and morally, an A1 nation, worthy of the longevity which we, as a ruling race, are enjoying.

Our post-war postulates will prove whether the war has had the tonic effect of a revivifying cold plunge or produced nothing better than the lassitude which follows a Turkish bath.

Reference has been made to the physical refreshment of sleep in a cold, airy room, the windows of which are wide open. I think that the mental recuperation comes about when we put aside the complicated and exotic pleasures of our modern devising, and go out into the country to enjoy for a brief space the simple delights which Nature offers. It is true that present day conditions and the necessity of ceaselessly striving to keep pace, allow all too few such respites in Arcadia, but even in cities idealism may be preserved when the windows of the mind are flung wide open.

This question of living to be a hundred is not an individual one, but a matter which concerns the whole world, for Jack and his master have equal rights in life.

People are apt to curse the working classes for the claims they are enforcing, but can one do so, honestly? Think back ten years to the time when the labourer got his cottage free, or for half-a-crown a week, but had to support a wife and raise a dozen children on a wage of considerably less than a pound a week!

Simplify Your Life.

Mental indigestion supplies another reason why the majority of people shrink from facing a hundred years of life. Our food, both physical and mental, is too rich and fanciful.

If we are to live happily to a hundred years we must have good, straightforward literature in place of psycho-analysis and sob-stuff; clean plays in place of "movie" thrills; and sweet, simple music, instead of the frantic emanations from the brains of the jazz maniacs.

The "Philosopher's Stone" of Happy

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Longevity is a combination of physical common-sense and mental idealism.

Summarised, the physical side of the question of long life amounts to this, that, apart from the accidents of fate and the risk of infectious or contagious disease, there is no reason why men and women should not attain ripe old age, provided that they live sanely and moderately and take healthy exercise.

It must, however, be added that certain occupations tend to shorten life, but with this matter I shall deal in the consideration of mental longevity, and, need I add, that the nervous, highly-strung individual wears himself out far more quickly than his phlegmatic brother?

Generally speaking, the dweller in cities, who is constantly subjected to brain strain and business worry, does not last so long as, say, the pioneer or explorer, who endures endless hardships and goes in almost daily peril of his life.

For example, one often finds a trapper or a "timber-cruiser" in Canada, or a big-game hunter—who has survived the perils of his trade—in Africa, as steady as a rock at seventy years of age and capable of putting up a good fight for his own hand; they are, moreover, boyishly interested in life, beneath their hardly broken reserve, and entirely contented, and therein lies the secret of making the living to a hundred years of age worth while.

Game to the End.

It is with set intent I have mentioned the fund of reserve and contentment of these men. They are nomads, in the main, living self-contained lives and making few friends, as the term is understood in civilised circles. Of course, I expect to be told that under these conditions their lives cannot possibly be satisfactory, for friendship is the very salt of existence; but these men have all Nature and the wonderful Wild for friend, and every fresh human acquaintance is of the utmost interest to them, for they are, of necessity, keen students of human nature.

The reason why so few of the dwellers within civilised confines evince any desire to live to be a hundred is because their lives are so entirely centred in and dependent upon those around them to whom they are bound by ties of association and affection. They know that the change we call Death is inevitable, but forget that it is only a change.

The Intolerance of Youth.

They are afraid of the loneliness which old age brings to most of us with the passing of our contemporaries. It is a loneliness induced by the inability of Youth and Age to see things from the same standpoint, which is made worse by the intolerance of Youth at the inability of Age to envisage new principles. This loneliness may, however, be avoided if we have but the strength of will to preserve our ideals and the sense not to be too obstinately certain that "that which is is best."

If these principles are accepted, then Youth ceases to be intolerant and will meet Age half-way in the giving and receiving of that experience which Age has acquired so hardly and is so eager to impart for the benefit of Youth.

I often think of the lines graven on Sullivan's unpretentious monument in the Embankment Gardens:

> "Is life a boon?
> If so, it must befall
> That Death, whene'er he call,
> Will call too soon."

It is the theme we find running through the writings of all the great masters. Life *is* a boon, if we will but use it aright; physically, by preserving our bodies at their best as long as we are able, and, mentally, by retaining our youthful spirit unimpaired despite the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."

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(Continued from page 186.)

she was, unmarried to this day, owning a Gallery!

Why didn't Fleur come, so that he could get away? He saw those three return together from the other room and pass back along the far side of the screen. The boy was standing before the Juno now. And suddenly, on the other side of her, Soames saw—his daughter, with eyebrows raised, as well they might be. He could see her eyes glinting sideways at the boy, and the boy look back at her. Then Irene slipped her hand through his arm, and drew him on. Soames saw him glancing round, and Fleur looking after them as the three went out.

A voice said cheerfully: "A bit thick, isn't it, sir?"

The young man who had handed him his handkerchief was again passing. Soames nodded.

"I don't know what we're coming to."

"Oh! That's all right, sir," answered the young man cheerfully; "they don't, either."

Fleur's voice said:

"Hullo, Father! There you are!"

The young man, snatching off his hat, passed on.

"Well," said Soames, looking her up and down, "you're a punctual sort of young woman!"

This treasured possession of his life was of medium height and colour, with short, dark chestnut hair; her wide apart brown eyes were set in whites so clear that they glinted when they moved, and yet in repose were almost dreamy under very white, black-lashed lids, held over them in a sort of suspense. She had a charming profile, and nothing of her father in her face save a decided chin. Aware that his expression was softening as he looked at her, Soames frowned to preserve the unemotionalism proper to a Forsyte. He knew she was only too inclined to take advantage of his weakness.

Slipping her hand under his arm, she said:

"Who was that?"

"He picked up my handkerchief. We talked about the pictures."

"You're not going to buy *that*, Father?"

"No," said Soames grimly, "nor that Juno you've been looking at."

Fleur dragged at his arm. "Oh! Let's go! It's a ghastly show."

In the doorway they passed the young man called Mont and his partner. Soames had hung out a board with "Trespassers will be prosecuted" thereon, and he barely acknowledged the young fellow's salute.

"Well," he said in the street, "whom did you meet at Imogen's?"

"Aunt Winifred and that Monsieur Profond."

"Oh," muttered Soames, "that chap! What does your aunt see in him?"

"I don't know. He looks like his name—Prosper Profond. Mother says she likes him."

Soames grunted.

"Cousin Val and his wife were there."

"What!" said Soames. "I thought they were back in South Africa."

"Oh, no! They've sold their farm. Cousin Val is going to train racehorses on the Sussex Downs. They've got a jolly old manor house; they asked me down there."

Soames coughed. The news was distasteful to him. His nephew, Val, had married the daughter of "that fellow," his Cousin Jolyon.

"What's his wife like now?" he asked.

"Very quiet, but nice, I think."

Soames coughed again. "He's a rackety chap, your Cousin Val."

"Oh, no, Father; they're awfully devoted. I promised to go—Saturday to Wednesday next."

"Training racehorses!" said Soames. It was bad enough, but not the reason for his distaste. Why the deuce couldn't those two have stayed out in South Africa? If he didn't look out, she would come to know all about that old disgrace! Unpleasant things! H'm! They were round him this afternoon like a swarm of bees!

"I don't like it!" he said.

"I want to see the racehorses," murmured Fleur, "and they've promised I shall ride. Cousin Val can't walk much, you know; but he can ride perfectly. He's going to show me their gallops."

"Racing!" said Soames. "It's a pity the War didn't knock that on the head. He's taking after his father, I'm afraid."

"I don't know anything about his father."

"No," said Soames grimly. "He took an interest in horses and broke his neck in Paris, walking downstairs. Good riddance for your Aunt." He frowned, recollecting the inquiry into those stairs which he had attended in Paris six years ago because Montague Dartie could not attend it himself—perfectly normal stairs in a house where they played baccarat. Either his winnings or the way he had celebrated them had gone to his brother-in-law's head. The French procedure had been very loose; he had had a lot of trouble with it.

A sound from Fleur distracted his attention. "Look! The people who were in the Gallery with us."

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"What people?" muttered Soames, who knew perfectly well.

"I think that woman's beautiful."

"Come into this pastrycook's," said Soames abruptly, tightening his grip on her arm and turning into a confectioner's. It was—for him—a surprising thing to do, and he said rather anxiously: "What will you have?"

"Oh, I don't want anything! I had a cocktail and a tremendous lunch."

"We *must* have something now we're here," muttered Soames, keeping hold of her arm.

"Two teas," he said; "and two of those nougat things."

But no sooner were they seated than his soul sprang up. Those three—those three were coming in! He heard Irene say something to her boy, and his answer:

"Oh, no, Mum! this place is all right. My stunt." The three sat down.

At that moment, most awkward of his existence, crowded with ghosts and shadows from his past, in presence of the only two women he had ever loved—his divorced wife and his daughter by her successor—Soames was not so much afraid of *them* as of his cousin, June. She might make a scene—she might introduce those two children—she was capable of anything. He bit too hastily at the nougat and it stuck to his plate. Working at it with his finger he glanced at Fleur. She was masticating dreamily, but her eyes were on the boy. The Forsyte in him said: "Think, feel, and you're done for!" and he wiggled his finger desperately. Plate! Did Jolyon wear a plate? Did that woman wear a plate? Time had been when he had seen her wearing nothing! That was something, anyway, which had never been stolen from him. And she knew it, though she might sit there calm and self-possessed, as if she had never been his wife. An acid humour stirred in his Forsyte blood; a subtle pain divided by hair's-breadth from pleasure. If only June did not suddenly bring her hornets about his ears! The boy was talking.

"Of course, Auntie June"—so he called his half-sister 'Auntie!' did he?—well, she must be fifty if she was a day!—"it's jolly good of you to encourage them. Only—hang it all!" Soames stole a glance. Irene's startled eyes were bent watchfully on her boy. She—she had these devotions—for Bosinney—for that boy's father—for this boy! He touched Fleur's arm and said:

"Well, have you had enough?"

"One more, Father, please."

She would be sick! He went to the counter to pay. When he turned round again he saw Fleur standing near the door holding a handkerchief which the boy had evidently just handed to her.

"F. F.," he heard her say. "Fleur Forsyte—it's mine all right. Thank you ever so."

Good God! She had caught the trick from what he'd told her in the Gallery—Monkey!

"Forsyte? Why—that's my name too. Perhaps we're cousins."

"We must be. There aren't any others. I live at Mapledurham; where do you?"

"Robin Hill."

Question and answer had been so rapid that all was over before he could lift a finger. He saw Irene's face alive with startled feeling, gave the slightest shake of his head, and slipped his arm through Fleur's.

"Come along!" he said.

She did not move.

"Didn't you hear, Father? Isn't it queer—our name's the same. Are we cousins?"

"What's that?" he said. "Forsyte? Distant, perhaps."

"My name's Jolyon, sir. Jon for short."

"Oh! Ah!" said Soames. "Yes. Distant. How are you? Very good of you. Good-bye."

He moved on.

"Thanks awfully," Fleur was saying; "*Au revoir.*"

"*Au revoir!*" he heard the boy reply.

II.

FINE FLEUR FORSYTE.

Emerging from the pastrycook's, Soames' first impulse was to vent his nerves by saying to his daughter: "Dropping your handkerchief!" to which her absurd reply might be: "Well, I picked that up from you!" His second impulse, therefore, was to let sleeping dogs lie. But she would surely question him. He gave her a sidelong look, and found she was giving him the same. She said softly:

"Why don't you like those cousins, Father?"

Soames lifted the corner of his lip.

"What made you think that?"

"*Cela se voit.*"

"That sees itself!" What a way of putting it—French!

After twenty years of a French wife Soames had still little sympathy with that language; a theatrical affair and connected in his mind with all the refinements of domestic irony.

"How?" he asked.

"You *must* know them; and you didn't make a sign. I saw them looking at you."

["*TO LET*" *continued overleaf.*]

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"I've never seen the boy in my life," replied Soames with perfect truth.

"No; but you've seen the others, dear."

Soames gave her another look. What had she picked up? Had her Aunt Winifred, or Imogen, or Val Dartie and his wife been talking? Every breath of the old scandal had been carefully kept from her at home, and Winifred warned many times that he wouldn't have a whisper of it reach her for the world. So far as she ought to know, he had never been married before. But her dark eyes, whose southern glint and clearness often almost frightened him, met his with perfect innocence.

"Well," he said, "your grandfather and his brother had a quarrel. The two families don't know each other."

"How romantic!"

"Now, what does she mean by that?" he thought. The word was to him extravagant and dangerous—it was as if she had said: "How jolly!"

"And they'll continue not to know each other," he added, but instantly regretted the challenge in those words. Fleur was smiling. In this age, when young people prided themselves on going their own ways and paying no attention to any sort of decent prejudice, he had said the very thing to excite her wilfulness. Then, recollecting the expression on Irene's face, he breathed again.

"What sort of a quarrel?" he heard Fleur say.

"About a house. It's ancient history for you. Your grandfather died the day you were born. He was ninety."

"Ninety? Are there many Forsytes besides those in the Directory?"

"I don't know," said Soames. "They're all dispersed now. The old ones are dead, except Timothy."

Fleur clasped her hands.

"Timothy? Isn't that delicious?"

"Not at all," said Soames. It offended him that she should think "Timothy" delicious—a kind of insult to his breed. This new generation mocked at anything solid and tenacious. "You go and see the old boy. He might want to prophesy." Ah! If Timothy could see the disquiet England of his great-nephews and nieces, he would certainly give tongue. And involuntarily he glanced up at the Iseeum; yes—George was still in the window, with the same pink paper in his hand.

"Where is Robin Hill, Father?"

Robin Hill! Robin Hill, round which all that tragedy had centred! What did she want to know for?

"In Surrey," he muttered; "not far from Richmond. Why?"

"Is the house there?"

"What house?"

"That they quarrelled about."

"Yes. But what's all that to do with you? We're going home to-morrow—you'd better be thinking about your frocks."

"Bless you! They're all thought about. A family feud? It's like the Bible, or Mark Twain—awfully exciting. What did you do in the feud, Father?"

"Never you mind."

"Oh! But if I'm to keep it up?"

"Who said you were to keep it up?"

"You, darling."

"I? I said it had nothing to do with you."

"Just what *I* think, you know; so that's all right."

She was too sharp for him; *fine*, as Annette sometimes called her. Nothing for it but to distract her attention.

"There's a bit of rosaline point in here," he said, stopping before a shop, "that I thought you might like."

When he had paid for it and they had resumed their progress, Fleur said:

"Don't you think that boy's mother is the most beautiful woman of her age you've ever seen?"

Soames shivered. Uncanny, the way she stuck to it!

"I don't know that I noticed her."

"Dear, I saw the corner of your eye."

"You see everything—and a great deal more, it seems to me!"

"What's her husband like? He must be your first cousin, if your fathers were brothers."

"Dead, for all I know," said Soames, with sudden vehemence. "I haven't seen him for twenty years."

"What was he?"

"A painter."

"That's quite jolly."

The words: "If you want to please me you'll put those people out of your head," sprang to Soames' lips, but he choked them back—he must *not* let her see his feelings.

"He once insulted me," he said.

Her quick eyes rested on his face.

"I see! You didn't avenge it, and it rankles. Poor Father! You let me have a go!"

It was really like lying in the dark with a mosquito hovering above his face. Such pertinacity in Fleur was new to him, and, as they reached the hotel, he said grimly:

"I did my best. And that's enough about these people. I'm going up till dinner."

"I shall sit here."

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With a parting look at her extended in a chair—a look half-resentful, half-adoring—Soames moved into the lift and was transported to their suite on the fourth floor. He stood by the window of the sitting-room which gave view over Hyde Park, and drummed a finger on its pane. His feelings were confused, tetchy, troubled. The throb of that old wound, scarred over by Time and new interests, was mingled with displeasure and anxiety, and a slight pain in his chest where that nougat stuff had disagreed. Had Annette come in? Not that she was any good to him in such a difficulty. Whenever she had questioned him about his first marriage, he had always shut her up; she knew nothing of it, save that it had been the great passion of his life, and his marriage with herself but domestic makeshift. She had always kept the grudge of that up her sleeve, as it were, and used it commercially. He listened. A sound—the vague murmur of a woman's movements—was coming through the door. She *was* in. He tapped.

"Who?"

"I," said Soames.

She had been changing her frock, and was still imperfectly clothed; a striking figure before her glass. There was a certain magnificence about her arms, shoulders, hair, which had darkened since he first knew her, about the turn of her neck, the silkiness of her garments, her dark-lashed, grey-blue eyes—she was certainly as handsome at forty as she had ever been. A fine possession, an excellent housekeeper, a sensible and affectionate enough mother. If only she weren't always so frankly cynical about the relations between them! Soames, who had no more real affection for her than she had for him, suffered from a kind of English grievance, in that she had never dropped even the thinnest veil of sentiment over their partnership.

Like most of his countrymen and women, he held the view that marriage should be based on mutual love, but that when from a marriage love had disappeared, or been found never to have really existed—so that it was manifestly not based on love—you must not say so. There it was, and the love was not—but there you were, and must continue to be! Thus you had it both ways, and were not tarred with cynicism, realism, and immorality, like the French. Moreover, it was necessary in the interests of property. He knew that she knew that they both knew that there was no love between them, but he still expected her not to admit in words or conduct such a thing, and he could never understand what she meant when she talked of the hypocrisy of the English.

"Whom have you got at 'The Shelter' next week?" he said.

Annette went on touching her lips delicately with salve—he always wished she wouldn't do that.

"Your sister Winifred, and the Car-r-digans"—she took up a tiny stick of black—"and Prosper Profond."

"That Belgian chap? Why him?"

Annette turned her neck lazily, touched one eyelash, and said:

"He amuses Winifred."

"I want someone to amuse Fleur; she's restive."

"R-restive?" repeated Annette. "Is it the first time you see that, my friend? She was born r-restive, as you call it.'

Would she never get that affected roll out of her r's?

He touched the dress she had taken off and asked:

"What have you been doing?"

Annette looked at him reflected in her glass. Her just-brightened lips smiled, rather full, rather ironical.

"Enjoying myself," she said.

"Oh!" answered Soames glumly. "Ribbandry, I suppose."

It was his word for all that incomprehensible running in and out of shops that women went in for. "Has Fleur got her summer dresses?"

"You don't ask if I have mine."

"You don't care whether I do or not."

"Quite right. Well, she has; and I have mine—terribly expensive."

"H'm!" said Soames. "What does that chap, Profond, do in England?"

Annette raised the eyebrows she had just finished.

"He yachts."

"Ah!" said Soames; "he's a sleepy chap."

"Sometimes," answered Annette, and her face had a sort of quiet enjoyment. "But sometimes very amusing."

"He's got a touch of the tar-brush about him."

Annette stretched herself.

"Tar-brush?" she said. "What is that? His mother was *Arménienne*."

"That's it, then," muttered Soames. "Does he know anything about pictures?"

"He knows about everything—a man of the world."

"Well, get someone for Fleur. I want to distract her. She's going off on Saturday to Val Dartie and his wife; I don't like it."

"Why not?"

Since the reason could not be explained without going into family history, Soames merely answered:

["*TO LET*" *continued overleaf.*]

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"Rocketing about. There's too much of it."

"I like that little Mrs. Val; she is very quiet and clever."

"I know nothing of her except—— This thing's new." And Soames took up a creation from the bed.

Annette received it from him.

"Would you hook me?" she said.

Soames hooked. Glancing once over her shoulder into the glass, he saw the expression on her face, faintly amused, faintly contemptuous, as much as to say: "Thanks! You will never learn!" No, thank God, he wasn't a Frenchman! He finished with a jerk and the words:

"It's too low here." And he went to the door with the wish to get away from her and go down to Fleur again.

Annette stayed a powder-puff, and said with startling suddenness:

"*Comme tu es grossier!*"

He knew the expression—he had reason to. The first time she had used it he had thought it meant "What a grocer you are!" and had not known whether to be relieved or not when better informed. He resented the word—he was *not* coarse! If he was coarse, what was that chap in the room beyond his who made those horrible noises in the morning when he cleared his throat, or those people in the Lounge who thought it well-bred to say nothing but what the whole world could hear at the top of their voices—quacking inanity! Coarse, because he had said her dress was low! Well, so it was! He went out without reply.

Coming into the Lounge from the far end, he at once saw Fleur where he had left her. She sat with crossed knees, slowly balancing a foot in silk stocking and grey shoe, sure sign that she was dreaming. Her eyes showed it, too—they went off like that sometimes. And then, in a moment, she would come to life and be as quick and restless as a monkey. And she knew so much, so self-assured, and not yet nineteen!

What was that odious word? Flapper! Dreadful young creatures—squealing and squawking and showing their legs! The worst of them bad dreams, the best of them powdered angels! Fleur was *not* a flapper, *not* one of those slangy, ill-bred young females. And yet she was frighteningly self-willed, and full of life, and determined to enjoy it.

Enjoy! The word brought no puritan terror to Soames; but it brought the terror suited to his temperament. He had always been afraid to enjoy to-day for fear he might not enjoy to-morrow so much. And it was terrifying to feel that his daughter was divested of that safeguard. The very way she sat in that chair showed it—lost in her dream. He had never been lost in a dream himself—there was nothing to be had out of it; and where she got it from he did not know! Certainly not from Annette! And yet Annette, as a young girl, when he was hanging about her, had once had a flowery look. Well, she had lost it now!

Fleur rose from her chair—swiftly, restlessly—and flung herself down at a writing-table. Seizing ink and writing-paper, she began to write as if she had not time to breathe before she got her letter written. And suddenly she saw him. The air of desperate absorption vanished, she smiled, waved a kiss, made a pretty face as if she were a little puzzled and a little bored.

Ah! She was "*fine—fine!*"

III.

AT ROBIN HILL.

Jolyon Forsyte had spent his boy's nineteenth birthday at Robin Hill, quietly going into his affairs. He did everything quietly now, because his heart was in a poor way, and, like all his family, he disliked the idea of dying. He had never realised how much till one day, two years ago, he had gone to his doctor about certain symptoms, and been told:

"At any moment, on any overstrain."

He had taken it with a smile—the natural Forsyte reaction against an unpleasant truth. But with an increase of symptoms in the train on the way home he had taken in the full of the sentence hanging over him. To leave Irene, his boy, his home, his work—though he did little enough work now! To leave them for unknown darkness, for the unimaginable state, for such nothingness that he would not even be conscious of wind stirring leaves above his grave, nor of the scent of earth and grass. Of such nothingness that, however hard he might try to conceive it, he never could, and must still hover on the hope that he might see again those he loved! To realise this was to endure very poignant spiritual anguish. Before he reached home that day he had determined to keep it from Irene. He would have to be more careful than man had ever been, for the least thing would give it away and make her as wretched as himself almost. His doctor had passed him sound in other respects, and seventy was nothing of an age—he would last a long time yet, *if he could!*

Such a conclusion, followed out for over two years develops to the full the subtler side of character. Naturally not abrupt, except when nervously excited, Jolyon had

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become control incarnate. The sad patience of old people, who cannot exert themselves, was masked by a smile which his lips preserved even in private. He devised continually all manner of cover to conceal his enforced lack of exertion. Mocking himself for doing so, he counterfeited conversion to the Simple Life; gave up wine and cigars, and drank a special kind of coffee with no coffee in it.

In short, he made himself as safe as a Forsyte in his condition could under the rose of his mild irony. Secure from discovery, since his wife and son had gone up to Town, he had spent the fine May day quietly arranging his papers, that he might die to-morrow without inconveniencing anyone, giving in fact a final polish to his terrestrial state. Having docketed and enclosed it in his father's old Chinese cabinet, he put the key into an envelope, wrote the words outside, "Key of the Chinese cabinet, wherein will be found the exact state of me.—J. F.," and put it in his breast pocket, where it would be always about him, in case of accident. Then, ringing for tea, he went out to have it under the old oak tree.

All are under sentence of death; Jolyon, whose sentence was but a little more precise and pressing, had become so used to it that he thought habitually, like other people, of other things. He thought of his son now.

Jon was nineteen that day, and Jon had come of late to a decision. Educated neither at Eton like his father, nor at Harrow, like his dead half-brother, but at one of those establishments which, designed to avoid the evil and contain the good of the Public School system, may or may not contain the evil and avoid the good, Jon had left in April perfectly ignorant of what he wanted to become. The War which had promised to go on for ever, had ended just as he was about to join the Army, six months before his time. It had taken him all his time since to get used to the idea that he could now choose for himself. He had held with his father several discussions, from which, under a cheery show of being ready for anything—except, of course, the Church, Army, Law, Stage, Stock Exchange, Medicine, Business and Engineering—Jolyon had gathered rather clearly that Jon wanted to go in for nothing.

He himself had felt exactly like that at the same age. With him that pleasant vacuity had soon been ended by an early marriage, and its unhappy consequences. Forced to become an underwriter at Lloyds', he had regained prosperity before his artistic talent had outcropped. But having—as the simple say—"learned" his boy to draw pigs and other animals, he knew that Jon would never be a painter, and inclined to the conclusion that his aversion from everything else meant that he was going to be a writer. Holding, however, the view that experience was necessary even for that profession, there seemed to Jolyon nothing for it in the meantime, for the boy, but University, travel, and perhaps the eating of dinners for the Bar. After that one would see, or more probably one would not. In face of these proffered allurements, however, Jon had remained undecided.

Such discussions with his son had confirmed in Jolyon a doubt whether the world had really changed. People said that it was a new age. With the profundity of one not too long for any age, Jolyon perceived that under slightly different surfaces, the era was precisely what it had been. Mankind was still divided into two species: The few who had "speculation" in their souls, and the many who had none, with a belt of hybrids like himself in the middle. Jon appeared to have speculation; it seemed to his father a bad look out!

With something deeper, therefore, than his usual smile, he had heard the boy say, a fortnight ago: "I should like to try farming, Dad; if it won't cost you too much. It seems to be about the only sort of life that doesn't hurt anybody; except art, and that's out of the question for me."

Jolyon subdued his smile, and answered:

"All right; you shall skip back to where we were under the first Jolyon in 1750. It'll prove the cycle theory, and incidentally, no doubt, you may grow a better turnip than he did."

A little dashed, Jon had answered:

"But don't you think it's all right, Dad?"

"'Twill serve, my dear; and if you should really take to it, you'll do more good than most men, which is little enough."

To himself, however, he had said: "But he won't take to it. I give him four years. Still, it's healthy, and harmless."

After turning the matter over and consulting with Irene, he wrote to his daughter, Mrs. Val Dartie, asking if they knew of a farmer near them on the Downs who would take Jon as an apprentice. Holly's answer had been enthusiastic. There was an excellent man quite close; she and Val would love Jon to live with them.

The boy was due to go to-morrow.

Sipping weak tea with lemon in it, Jolyon gazed through the leaves o the old oak tree at that view which had appeared to him desirable for thirty years. The tree beneath which he sat seemed not a day older! So

["TO LET" continued overleaf.]

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young, the little leaves of brownish gold; so old, the whitey-grey-green of its thick, rough trunk. A tree of memories, which would live on hundreds of years yet, unless some barbarian cut it down—would see old England out at the pace things were going!

He remembered a night three years ago, when, looking from his window, with his arm close round Irene, he had watched a German aeroplane hovering, it seemed, right over the old tree. Next day they had found a bomb-hole in a field on Gage's farm. That was before he knew that he was under sentence of death. He could almost have wished the bomb had finished him. It would have saved a lot of hanging about, many hours of cold fear in the pit of his stomach. He had counted on living to the normal Forsyte age of eighty-five or more, when Irene would be seventy. As it was, she would miss him. Still there was Jon, more important in her life than himself; Jon who adored his mother.

Under that tree, where old Jolyon—waiting for Irene to come to him across the lawn—had breathed his last, Jolyon wondered, whimsically, whether, having put everything in such perfect order, he had not better close his own eyes and drift away. There was something undignified in parasitically clinging on to the effortless close of a life wherein he regretted two things only—the long division between his father and himself when he was young and the lateness of his union with Irene.

From where he sat he could see a cluster of apple trees in blossom. Nothing in Nature moved him so much as fruit trees in blossom, and his heart ached suddenly because he might never see them flower again. Spring! Decidedly no man ought to have to die while his heart was still young enough to love beauty! Blackbirds sang recklessly in the shrubbery, swallows were flying high, the leaves above him glistened; and over the fields was every imaginable tint of early foliage, burnished by the level sunlight, away to where blue, like distant smoke-bush, was trailed along the horizon.

Irene's flowers in their narrow beds had startling individuality that evening, little deep assertions of gay life. Only Chinese and Japanese painters, and perhaps Leonardo, had known how to get that startling little ego into each painted flower and bird and beast—the go, yet the sense of species, the universality of life as well. They were the fellows!

I've made nothing that will live!" thought Jolyon; "I've been an amateur—a mere lover, not a creator. Still, I shall leave Jon behind me when I go." What luck that the boy had not been caught by that ghastly war! He might so easily have been killed, like poor Jolly twenty years ago in the Transvaal. Jon would do something some day—if the Age didn't spoil him—an imaginative chap! His whim to take up farming was but a bit of sentiment, and about as likely to last. And just then he saw them coming up the field, Irene and the boy, walking from the station with their arms linked. And getting up he strolled down through the new rose garden to meet them. . . .

Irene came into his room that night and sat down by the window. She sat there without speaking till he said:

"What is it, my love?"

"We had an encounter to-day."

"With whom?"

"Soames."

Soames! He had kept that name out of his thoughts these last two years, conscious that it was bad for him. And now his heart moved in a disconcerting manner, as if it had side-slipped within his chest.

Irene went on quietly:

"He and his daughter were in the Gallery, and afterwards at the confectioner's where we had tea."

Jolyon went over and put his hand on her shoulder.

"How did he look?"

"Grey, but otherwise much the same."

"And the daughter?"

"Pretty. At least Jon thought so."

Jolyon's heart side-slipped again. His wife's face had a strained and puzzled look.

"You didn't——?" he began.

"No, but Jon knows their name. The girl dropped her handkerchief and he picked it up."

Jolyon sat down on his bed. An evil chance!

"June was with you. Did she put her foot into it?"

"No; but it was all very queer and strained, and Jon could see it was."

Jolyon drew a long breath and said:

"I've often wondered whether we've been right to keep it from him. He'll find out some day."

"The later the better, Jolyon; the young have such cheap, hard judgment. When you were nineteen what would you have thought of *your* mother if she had done what I have?"

Yes! There it was! Jon worshipped his mother, and knew nothing of the tragedies, the inexorable necessities of life, nothing of the prisoned grief in an unhappy marriage, nothing of jealousy or passion—knew nothing at all, as yet!

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"What have you told him?" he said at last.

"That they were relations, but we didn't know them; that you had never cared much for your family, or they for you. I expect he will be asking *you*."

Jolyon smiled. "This promises to take the place of air raids," he said. "After all, one misses them."

Irene looked up at him and murmured:

"We've known it would come some day."

He answered her with sudden energy.

"I could never stand seeing Jon blame you. He shan't do that, even in thought. He has imagination; and he'll understand if it's put to him properly. I think I had better tell him before he gets to know otherwise."

"Not yet, Jolyon."

That was like her—she had no foresight, and never went to meet trouble. Still—who knew?—she might be right. It was ill going against a mother's instinct. It might be well to let the boy go on, if possible, till experience had given him some touchstone by which he could judge the values of that old tragedy; till love, jealousy, longing, had deepened his charity. Still, one must take precautions—all the precautions possible! And, long after Irene had left him, he lay awake turning over those precautions. He must write to Holly, telling her that Jon knew nothing as yet of family history. Holly was discreet, she would make sure of her husband, who would see to it! Jon could take the letter with him when he went to-morrow.

And so the day on which he had put the polish on his material estate died out with the chiming of the stable clock; and another began for Jolyon in the shadow of a spiritual disorder which could not be so rounded off and polished. . . .

But Jon, whose room had once been his day nursery, lay awake too, the prey of a sensation disputed by those who have never known it, "love at first sight!" He had felt it beginning in him with the glint of those dark eyes gazing into his athwart the Juno—a conviction that this was his dream; so that what followed had seemed to him at once natural and miraculous. Fleur! Her name alone was almost enough for one who was terribly susceptible to the charm of words.

In a homœopathic age, when boys and girls were co-educated, and mixed up in early life till sex was almost abolished, Jon was singularly old-fashioned. His ultra-modern school took boys only, and his holidays had been spent at Robin Hill with boy friends, or his parents alone. He had never, therefore, been inoculated against the germs of love by small doses of the poison. And now in the dark his temperature was mounting fast. He lay awake, featuring Fleur—as they called it—recalling her words, specially that "*Au revoir!*" so soft and sprightly.

He was still so wide awake at dawn that he got up, slipped on tennis shoes, trousers, and a sweater, and in silence crept downstairs and out through the study window. It was just light, and smelled of grass. "Fleur!" he thought; "Fleur!" It was mysteriously white out of doors, with nothing awake except the birds just beginning to chirp. "I'll go down into the coppice," he thought. He ran down through the fields, reached the pond just as the sun rose, and passed into the coppice. Bluebells carpeted the ground there; among the larch trees there was mystery—the air, as it were, composed of that romantic quality.

Jon sniffed its freshness, and stared at the bluebells in the sharpening light. Fleur! It rhymed with Her! And she lived at Mapledurham—a jolly name, too, on the river somewhere. He could find it in the atlas presently. He would write to her. But would she answer? Oh! She must. She had said "*Au revoir!*" Not good-bye! What luck that she had dropped her handkerchief! He would never have known her but for that. The more he thought of that handkerchief, the more amazing his luck seemed. Fleur! But did it quite rhyme with Her? Rhythm thronged his head; words jostled to be joined together; he was on the verge of a poem.

Jon remained in this condition for more than half-an-hour, then returned to the house, and getting a ladder, climbed in at his bedroom window out of sheer exhilaration. Then, remembering that the study window was open, he went down and shut it, first removing the ladder, so as to obliterate all traces of his feeling. The thing was too deep to be revealed to mortal soul—even to his mother.

Soames dares not tell Fleur that Jon is the son of Soames' divorced wife, and Jolyon dares not tell Jon that Fleur is the daughter of Jon's mother's first husband, who divorced her. But the young people are attracted to one another and seem bound to find out. The development of this situation in the February instalment is of absorbing interest.

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Mr. Editor—His Page.

18 *Henrietta Street,*
London, W.C. 2.
12 12-1920.

You, for Instance—

You are reading the new Galsworthy serial eagerly, are you not? I cannot tell you how the Forsyte family grows on a person. The members of it feel like one's own relatives in a very short time. "In Chancery," Mr. Galsworthy's latest book, is the sensation of the publishing season—I never remember such enthusiastic reviews of any volume.

"In Chancery" brought the story of our friends the Forsytes down to the birth of Fleur, who is the heroine of "To Let." The critics with one voice hail it as a masterpiece. But I consider "To Let" is, if possible, a greater novel than "In Chancery."

The lonely figure of Soames stalking majestically towards his destiny, preserving his principles in days when principles, according to him, are falling like autumn leaves, has not been surpassed by anything in fiction.

And Also—

You are reading Elinor Glyn's articles, too, I feel sure. Mrs. Glyn writes about children with a passionate sense of justice. Next month she contributes an article entitled "How I Would Educate a Husband."

"Man," she says, "has to fight a natural instinct when he is faithful to one woman—and woman has merely to resist an acquired desire when she is faithful to one man."

I agree with you that by developing this theme a remarkable article might be written. Mrs. Glyn has written it for the March ROYAL.

Hate.

In a period when we are urged to build up a great national dye industry because it can switch over to the production of poison gas when the next war breaks out, I do not apologise for the appearance of Christine Jope-Slade's article, "Why Do You Hate Me?" (p. 326) in these pages. Really, the next man or the next woman is a very good fellow if we would only believe it. The trouble is we cast so little bread upon the waters nowadays.

A Suggestion.

Why not make some friend at home or over seas happy by giving her or him a year's subscription to the ROYAL *for a New Year present, thus enabling the recipient to enjoy the Galsworthy serial?*

Competition Result.

Here follow the names and addresses of the prize winners in the Magazine Phrase Competition, run in conjunction with PEARSON'S MAGAZINE *and the* NOVEL MAGAZINE:

Mr. H. A. Hellewell, Market Place, Otley, Yorkshire; Olive Payne, "Primrose Cottage," Gayton, Northants; Hamnett George Furner, 3 Clifton Vale, Clifton, Bristol; Phyllis Hewitt, 51 Palatine Road, Stoke Newington, N.16; Miss Enid Leale, Hawksfold, Fernhurst, Sussex; J. A. Smith, 53 Perrymead Street, Fulham, S.W.6.

The first receives five pounds, the remaining five one pound each.

Don't forget to take home:

Every Monday - -	PEARSON'S WEEKLY, HOME NOTES.
Every Tuesday - -	PEG'S PAPER.
Every Thursday -	SMALLHOLDER, SCOUT.
22nd of the Month -	THE NOVEL MAGAZINE.
1st of Month - - -	PEARSON'S MAGAZINE, HOME COOKERY.

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Photo Pulsham & Bonfield

Miss Violet Loraine is very simple in her tastes, and in spite of the elaborate costumes she often wears on the stage, has a decided preference for simple frocks.

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Photo Yevonde

"Real Lumps of Sunshine."

By Margaret Chute.

How would you like to create a character in ten minutes, to change your dress in ten seconds, to be a duchess, a coster, a police-woman, a Japanese, an Indian—and yourself, all in one show? Miss Violet Loraine, the popular revue "star," does it, and comes through the ordeal with her cheerfulness unimpaired, with energy to spare for a host of other interests besides.

COMEDY is Violet Loraine's Hall-Mark, bubbling, radiant, comedy.

It glows in the depths of kind, deep blue eyes, jumps from the tips of expressive fingers, wriggles through waves of corn-coloured hair, with real lumps of sunshine caught in the meshes: just Comedy—clean and clear, and the joy of life, and living.

She lives every hour of every day. In her work or play hours she is always keyed up to something a tone above the good old humdrum that she pokes fun at so cheerily.

"I'm a cheery creature, aren't I?" she shot out at me once. "Well, and why not? I've got lots to be cheery about. Lots of work, lots of friends, lots of luck (touching wood vigorously)—that's enough to make anybody cheery! And, my word, there doesn't seem to be a positive glut of good spirits among most folk, does there? All the more reason, therefore, to get as much sunshine into things as circumstances permit.

Her dressing-room is a meeting place for everyone, expected and unexpected. Whom would you, at a rough guess, expect to find talking to Violet Loraine between her songs? Hard to answer, on the spur of the moment! Yet, if you opened that door, as I have often done, it would surprise you to see East meeting West, and both glowing contentedly under the radiant warmth of her amazing nature.

She generally opens the door herself—with a glimpse of an orange-coloured kimono, or a sable coat flung over some bizarre stage dress.

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"Hullo, dear, is it you? Come along in—there's room on the sofa. You know everybody, don't you?" and then a string of names, famous and unknown, all sounding and seeming the same to this adorable Star.

In her dressing-room she is fairly volcanic, smoking Virginian cigarettes—"gaspers, stinkers, *I* don't mind what they are!"—dictating letters, signing cheques; making appointments; talking on the telephone; sipping boiling hot tea; darting behind a curtain to perform some rapid change of costume, still talking hard; bounding out, a new woman, to dive for the door—"Shan't be two shakes of a fly's wing; don't go."

Photo Yevonde.

Black and orange are Miss Loraine's favourite colours, and she has a weakness for chinchilla.

Orange and black are her favourite colours; all her rooms are full of orange-coloured flowers—wallflowers, deep yellow roses, nasturtiums, bronze and gold chrysanthemums, generally in large black bowls. Her sofa is orange and black, and she collects etchings, which decorate the severely plain walls of her dressing-room, in their narrow black frames.

Talking of people, and their attitude towards the stage and its players, Violet Loraine said:

"Why do they always speak of us and treat us as though we belonged to another world, as though we were rare beings set afar off, not taking any part in ordinary things? We are ordinary enough and human enough, though you'd never believe it, to hear the way some people talk of us and to us.

"You *must* have heard them: 'Oh, Miss Loraine, I'm *so* delighted you're dining with us; but I don't know what my cook can manage that will appeal to you. Caviare, of *course*, you love; and lark's tongue, and quail, and hot-house melons'; and when I say I love a dish of good roast beef, and an English rosy-cheeked apple, they nearly throw ten fits! It's nice of them to look on us as

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'something different'; but we eat and sleep and walk and play golf, and get into bad tempers just like the rest of creation. At least, I know *I* do."

After that dominating sense of Comedy, her simplicity is her chief characteristic. She loves simple things and simple people, and is herself the most simple and unaffected of them all.

Photo Reconde

When it comes to character parts Miss Loraine has few equals The contrast between her own *chic* appearance and that of the dowdy, respectable female she often impersonates, only emphasises her skill

Photo, Fulham & Banfield.

When most folk picture a stage star lounging in some luxurious, cushioned room, surrounded by masses of heavily-scented flowers, being manicured, marcelled, pedicured, massaged, and perfumed all at once, and then eating an expensive, highly-indigestible meal, what is a woman like Violet Loraine really doing? One of three things.

Out on the links, near her beloved house in the country, in a short skirt, thick shoes, and felt hat, tramping along on her second round. Or sitting quietly by herself in some

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concert hall, listening to the music—good music—she loves so deeply. Or in a Cinema theatre, watching a Screen Star at work, for she adores Cinemas.

But Music is what really matters.

"Isn't it funny," she has said before now, "that I, who entertain people with ragtime melodies, get my chief joy from the music of Old Masters? When strangers know I play the piano—and I do in my spare hours—they say how nice it must be for me to play over my own songs! Mind you, I appreciate the Revue and Musical Comedy type of music as much as anyone; I admire it. Anything that can make good has some real value, but when I talk about Music I'm not thinking of my own side of the profession.

"Music, to me, means the concert and opera stage—the world of musicians, saturated in melody and harmony, and all it represents.

"One day I dream of having a huge house in the country, and a music-room opening on to a terrace. That's where I shall be on summer evenings. Imagine music in surroundings like that—for music should always be listened to in surroundings that are in tune."

Few playgoers realise how hard a Revue Artist works. Talking of changes—both of dress and character—Violet Loraine can be eloquent on the subject of the demands Revue makes on its interpreters.

"Look at me, as an instance. I ask you, just count up what I have to do, and be, in one hour. I sing a comic song, a ragtime number, a straight ballad; I dance a bit; I talk a lot. I play burlesque, comedy, and drama. I have to create a character in ten minutes, and make people

Photo Record.

Music is Miss Loraine's ruling passion, and she is never happier than when she is at the piano.

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admiration for women workers. "I've tried it all—from 30s. a week in the chorus upwards. That's me! And I might have been a chorus girl still if I'd accepted the offer I had as a beginner to return to Drury Lane Pantomime for a second season in the chorus. When this proposal was made to me, I replied: 'No, thank you! If I come back to this theatre at all, it'll be as Principal Boy.'

"And two years later back I went in that capacity!"

Photo *Yevonde*

Revue work makes great demands on an actress, and it is not often——

remember it, and then change my dress in ten seconds! I am a duchess, a coster, a police-woman, a Japanese, an Indian—and myself! And all this nine times a week!"

Having been a worker all her life, she has a very keen

Photo *Fulsham & Banfield.*

——Miss Loraine has time to sit and meditate between the lightning changes of costume and make-up she has to achieve

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"To Let."

By John Galsworthy.

Illustrated by W. Hatherell, R.I.

Picture the feelings of Soames Forsyte, whose daughter, Fleur, the apple of his eye, adores Jon, the son of his divorced wife, Irene—(the only woman he ever really loved)—and you begin to realise the wonderful possibilities of this remarkable story. In the first instalment a dramatic meeting between the young people, Jon and Fleur, took place. Soames is filled with misgiving lest Fleur should learn that Jon is the son of his first wife. Irene and her husband, Jolyon Forsyte, are equally afraid that their son, Jon, who is obviously in love with Fleur, will discover that his mother was divorced by Fleur's father. The following instalment opens with Soames' visit to Timothy, the oldest surviving member of the Forsyte family.

IV.

THE MAUSOLEUM.

THERE are houses whose souls have passed into the limbo of Time, leaving their bodies in the limbo of London. Such was not quite the condition of "Timothy's" on the Bayswater Road, for Timothy's soul still had one foot in Timothy Forsyte's body, and Smither kept the atmosphere unchanging—of camphor and port-wine and house whose windows are only opened to air it twice a day.

To a Forsyte's imagination that house was now a sort of Chinese pill-box, a series of layers of wrappings, in the last of which was Timothy. One did not reach him, or so it was reported by members of the family who, out of old-time habit or absent-mindedness, would drive up once in a blue moon and ask after their surviving uncle.

Such were Francie, now quite emancipated from God (she frankly avowed atheism); Euphemia, emancipated from old Nicholas; and Winifred Dartie from her "man of the world." But, after all, everybody was emancipated now, or said they were—perhaps not quite the same thing!

When Soames, therefore, took it on his way to Paddington Station on the morning after that encounter, it was hardly with the expectation of seeing Timothy in the flesh. His heart made a faint demonstration within him while he stood in full south sunlight on the newly-whitened doorstep of that little house where four Forsytes had once lived, and now but one dwelt on like a winter fly; the house into which Soames had come and out of which he had gone times without number, divested of or burdened with fardels of family gossip; the house of the "old people" of another century, another age.

The sight of Smither, still corseted up to the armpits because the new fashion which came in as they were going out in 1903 had never been considered "nice" by Aunts Juley and Hester, brought a pale friendliness to Soames' lips; Smither, still faithfully arranged to old pattern in every detail; an invaluable servant—none such left—smiling back at him with the words: "Why, it's Mr. Soames, after all this time! And how are *you*, sir? Mr. Timothy will be so pleased to know you've been."

"How is he?"

"Oh, he keeps fairly bobbish for his age, sir; but, of course, he's a wonderful man. As I said to Mrs. Dartie when she was here last, 'It *would* please Miss Forsyte and Mrs. Juley and Miss Hester to see how he relishes a baked apple still. But he's quite deaf. And a mercy, I always think. For what we should have done with him in the air raids, I don't know."

"Ah!" said Soames. "What *did* you do with him?"

"We just left him in his bed, and had the bell run down into the cellar, so that Cook and I could hear him if he rang. It would never have done to let him know there was a war on. As I said to Cook, 'If Mr. Timothy rings, they may do what they like—I'm going up. My dear mistresses would have a fit if they could see him ringing and nobody going to him.' But he slept through

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Soames went into the back room and stood watching. The last of the old Forsytes was on his feet. . . . One hand held a stout stick, and the other grasped the skirt of his Jaeger dressing-gown. [Page 272, col. 1.]

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them all beautiful. And the one in the daytime he was having his bath. It *was* a mercy, because he might have noticed the people in the street all looking up—he often looks out of the window."

"Quite!" murmured Soames. Smither was getting garrulous. "I just want to look round and see if there's anything to be done."

'Yes, sir. I don't think there's anything except a smell of mice in the dining-room that we don't know how to get rid of. It's funny they should be there, and not a crumb since Mr. Timothy took to not coming down, just before the War. But they're nasty little things; you never know where they'll take you next."

"Does he leave his bed?"

"Oh, yes, sir; he takes nice exercise between his bed and the window in the morning, not to risk a change of air. And he's quite comfortable in himself; has his Will out every day regular. It's a great consolation to him—that."

"Well, Smither, I want to see him, if I can—in case he has anything to say to me."

Smither coloured up above her corsets.

"It *will* be an occasion!" she said. "Shall I take you round the house, sir, while I send Cook to break it to him?"

"No, you go to him," said Soames. "I can go round the house by myself."

One could not confess to sentiment before a servant, and Soames felt that he was going to be sentimental nosing round those rooms so saturated with the past. When Smither, creaking with excitement, had left him, Soames entered the dining-room and sniffed. In his opinion it wasn't mice, but incipient wood-rot, and he examined the panelling. Whether it was worth a coat of paint, at Timothy's age, he was not sure. The room had always been the most modern in the house; and only a faint smile curled Soames' lips and nostrils. Walls of a rich green surmounted the oak dado; a heavy metal chandelier hung by a chain from a ceiling divided by imitation beams.

The pictures had been bought by Timothy, a bargain, one day at Jobson's sixty years ago—three Snyder "still lifes," two faintly-coloured drawings of a boy and a girl, rather charming, which bore the initials "J. R."—Timothy had always believed they might turn out to be Joshua Reynolds, but Soames, who admired them, had discovered that they were only John Robinson; and a doubtful Morland of a white pony being shod. Deep-red plush curtains, ten high-backed, dark mahogany chairs with deep-red plush seats, a Turkey carpet, and a mahogany dining table as large as the room was small, such was an apartment which Soames could remember unchanged in soul or body since he was four years old. He looked especially at the two drawings, and thought: "I shall buy those at the sale."

From the dining-room he passed into Timothy's study. He did not remember ever having been into that room. It was lined from floor to ceiling with volumes, and he looked at them with curiosity. One wall seemed devoted to educational books, which Timothy's firm had published two generations back—sometimes as many as twenty copies of one book. Soames read their titles and shuddered. The middle wall had precisely the same books as used to be in the library at his own father's in Park Lane, from which he deduced the fancy that James and his youngest brother had gone out together one day and bought a brace of small libraries. The third wall he approached with more excitement. Here, surely, Timothy's own taste would be found. It was. The books were dummies.

The fourth wall was all heavily curtained window. And turned towards it was a large chair with a mahogany reading-stand attached, on which a yellowish and folded copy of the *Times*, dated July 6th, 1914, the day Timothy first failed to come down, as if in preparation for the War, seemed waiting for him still. In a corner stood a large globe of that world never visited by Timothy, deeply convinced of the unreality of everything but England, and permanently upset by the sea, on which he had been very sick one Sunday afternoon in 1836, out of a pleasure boat off the pier at Brighton, with Juley and Hester, Swithin and Hatty Chessman; all due to Swithin, who was always taking things into his head, and who, thank goodness, had been sick too.

Soames knew all about it, having heard the tale fifty times at least from one or other of them. He went up to the globe and gave it a spin; it emitted a faint creak and moved about an inch, bringing into his purview a daddy-longlegs which had died on it in latitude 44.

"Mausoleum!" he thought. "George was right!" And he went out and up the stairs. On the half-landing he stopped before the case of stuffed humming-birds which had delighted his childhood. They looked not a day older, suspended on wires above pampas grass. If the case were opened the birds would not begin to hum, but the whole thing would crumble, he suspected. It wouldn't be worth putting that into the sale!

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And suddenly he was caught by a memory of Aunt Ann—dear old Aunt Ann—holding him by the hand in front of that case and saying: "Look, Soamey! Aren't they bright and pretty, dear little humming-birds!" Soames remembered his own answer: "They don't hum, Auntie." He must have been six, in a black velveteen suit with a light blue collar—he remembered that suit well! Aunt Ann with her ringlets, and her spidery, kind hands, and her grave old aquiline smile—a fine old lady, Aunt Ann!

He moved on up to the drawing-room door. There on each side of it were the group of miniatures. Those he would certainly buy in. The miniatures of his four Aunts, one of his Uncle Swithin adolescent, and one of his Uncle Nicholas as a boy. They had all been painted by a young lady friend of the family at a time, 1830 about, when miniatures were considered very genteel, and lasting too, painted, as they were, on ivory. Many a time had he heard the tale of that young lady: "Very talented, my dear; she had quite a weakness for Swithin, and very soon after she went into a consumption and died; so like Keats—we often spoke of it."

Well, there they were! Ann, Juley, Hester, Susan quite a small child; Swithin with sky-blue eyes, pink cheeks, yellow curls, white waistcoat—large as life; and Nicholas like a Cupid with an eye on heaven. Now he came to think of it, Uncle Nick had always been rather like that—a wonderful man to the last. Yes, she must have had talent, and miniatures always had a certain back-watered cachet of their own, little subject to the currents of competition on æsthetic Change. Soames opened the drawing-room door. The room was dusted, the furniture uncovered, the curtains drawn back, precisely as if his Aunts still dwelt there patiently waiting. And a thought came to him: When Timothy died—why not? Would it not be almost a duty to preserve this house—like Carlyle's—and put up a tablet, and show it? "Specimen of mid-Victorian abode—entrance, one shilling, with catalogue."

After all, it was the completest thing, and perhaps the deadest in the London of to-day. Perfect in its special taste and culture, if, that is, he took down and carried over to his own collection the four Barbizon pictures he had given them. The still sky-blue walls, the green curtains patterned with red flowers and ferns; the crewel-worked fire-screen before the cast-iron grate; the mahogany cupboard with glass windows, full of little knick-knacks; the beaded footstools; Keats, Shelley, Southey, Cowper, Coleridge, Byron's Corsair (but no other), and the Victorian poets in a bookshelf row; the marqueterie cabinet lined with dim red plush, full of family relics; Hester's first fan; the buckles of their mother's father's shoes; three bottled scorpions; and one very yellow elephant's tusk, sent home from India by great-Uncle Edgar Forsyte, who had been in jute; a yellow bit of paper propped up, with spidery writing on it, recording God knew what!

And the pictures crowding on the walls—all water-colours save those four Barbizons looking like the foreigners they were, and doubtful customers at that—pictures bright and illustrative: "Telling the Bees," "Hey for the Ferry!" and two in the style of Frith, all thimblerig and crinolines, given them by Swithin. Oh! many, many pictures at which Soames had gazed a thousand times in supercilious fascination; a marvellous collection of bright, smooth gilt frames.

And the boudoir-grand piano, beautifully dusted, hermetically sealed as ever; and Aunt Juley's album of pressed seaweed on it. And the gilt-legged chairs, stronger than they looked. And on one side of the fireplace the sofa of crimson silk, where Aunt Ann, and after her Aunt Juley, had been wont to sit, facing the light and bolt upright. And on the other side of the fire the one really easy chair, back to the light, for Aunt Hester. Soames screwed up his eyes; he seemed to see them sitting there. Ah! and the atmosphere—even now, of too many stuffs and washed lace curtains, lavender in bags, and dried bees' wings.

"No," he thought, "there's nothing like it left; it ought to be preserved." And, by George, they might laugh at it, but for a standard of gentle life never departed from, for fastidiousness of skin and eye and nose and feeling, it beat to-day hollow—to-day with its tubes and cars, its perpetual smoking, its cross-legged, bare-necked girls visible up to the knees and down to the waist if you took the trouble (agreeable to the Satyr within each Forsyte but hardly his idea of a lady), with their feet, too, screwed round the legs of their chairs while they ate, and their "So longs," and their "Old Beans," and their laughter—girls who gave him the shudders whenever he thought of Fleur in contact with them; and the hard-eyed, capable older women who managed life and gave him the shudders too. No! his old Aunts, if they never opened their minds, their eyes, or very much their windows, at least had manners, and a standard, and reverence for past and future.

With rather a choky feeling he closed the

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door and went tiptoeing upstairs. He looked in at a place on the way. H'm! in perfect order of the eighties, with a sort of yellow oilskin paper on the walls. At the top of the stairs he hesitated between four doors. Which of them was Timothy's? And he listened. A sound as of a child slowly dragging a hobby-horse about, came to his ears. That must be Timothy! He tapped, and a door was opened by Smither very red in the face.

Mr. Timothy was taking his walk and she had not been able to get him to attend. If Mr. Soames would come into the back room he could see him through the door.

Soames went into the back room and stood watching.

The last of the old Forsytes was on his feet, moving with the most impressive slowness, and an air of perfect concentration on his own affairs, backwards and forwards between the foot of his bed and the window, a distance of some twelve feet. The lower part of his square face, no longer clean-shaven, was covered with snowy beard clipped as short as it could be, and his chin looked as broad as his brow where the hair was also quite white, while nose and cheeks and brow were a good yellow. One hand held a stout stick and the other grasped the skirt of his Jaeger dressing-gown, from under which could be seen his bed-socked ankles and feet thrust into Jaeger slippers. The expression on his face was that of a crossed child, intent on something that he has not got. Each time he turned he stumped the stick and then dragged it, as if to show that he could do without it.

He thought he had lost her, then almost ran into her standing quite still.—

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Isn't it jolly?" she cried . . . She reached up, twisted off a blossom, and twirling it in her fingers said: "I suppose I can call you Jon?" [*Page 348, col. 1.*]

"He still looks strong," said Soames under his breath.

"Oh, yes, sir! You should see him take his bath — it's wonderful; and he does enjoy it."

Those quite loud words gave Soames an

["*TO LET*" *is continued on page 340.*]

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"Read Them and Weep."

By Joseph Hergesheimer.

Illustrated by John Campbell.

I.

It came magical and grey in the night, like the grey magic of the mushrooms we found in the sparkling green grass of September dawns. To the north the slope of our secluded little valley rose, shutting out the quiet town beyond; and on its brow the tents of the circus drew a strange, irregular silhouette against the early sun. First there had been a persistent hammering, muffled by sleep, and then the long, icy cry of, perhaps, a lion, penetrated a stillness of apple-blossoms, flowery meadows and ploughed fields.

The local conservative opinion, gathered about the wall of the principal barn, was that the chickens and dogs would have to be closely penned until those vagabonds—yes, and cut-throats—had cleared out. Samuel Fids, who worked about the barn, added his condemnation of the higher morals of circus men and the spangled women. "Loose" was what he said.

But it seemed to me that he lingered over the phrase longer than necessary. It was, in reality, more of a tentative assertion than a charge. He was on the verge of marrying Annie McKee, and it was apparent that his tone reflected the inevitable masculine uneasiness in the face of that irrevocable act.

A road with violet-blue banks and deep gutters, now bright with rushing water, divided the valley, and beyond, across from the barn, was the small pink plaster house that held the large family of McKees. From my high terrace their expanse presented a seeming wall of new, vivid wheat, with an opening about the dwelling always lively with diminutive McKees.

Annie worked in the telephone exchange of the town below the hill, the father was a carpenter, while Mrs. McKee was exclusively addressed to the obligations of maternity and the hanging out to dry of endless odd and revealing garments. McKee himself clung to uncompromising red flannels; no-one could name the slips, hardly larger than the clothes-pegs that held them, of the younger children; but it was plain that a good part of Annie's money went for the frivolity of obvious lace and even an occasional thing of flimsy silk.

She met Samuel Fids in the evening by the whitewashed post of the post-box beside the road, and later his slow, heavy footsteps could be heard coming up the side way that divided the barn and its acres from my improvident lawn. The nails of his farm shoes ground into the crushed-hard stone, and from a lower meadow sounded the minor piping of frogs. This had occurred last night in shadows thickened with scent and glimmering with moonlight, and never, I was certain, had pastoral love been more perfectly enveloped.

The florid white wagons with crimson wheels and gilded bars were grouped by baled hay and a wavering canvas lane of the hideous and obscene paintings advertising the unspeakable abnormal side-shows. A man led a string of horses down to the clear stream in the gutter, urging them, with an assumed anger, to drink; while beyond, the McKee children were positively hysterical with excitement. There were afternoon and evening shows, and through the former drifts of brassy melody alternated with the appalling, disconnected steam notes of the organ. The first entertainment at an end, streams of people, dominated by the dark, formal coats of the countrymen, ebbed away; and, attracted by the circus itself, its actual life and expert industry and individual philosophy, I crossed the soft earthen rise to the spidery pegging of the tents.

A very mature girl in a blue crêpe wrapper, her painted cheeks startling in the level flare of the sun, was scrubbing a pair of corsets in a bucket of soapy water, and from behind a straw-littered van came a vivid, enigmatic exclamation. Moving forward, I found a

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knot of men gathered about a metal rectangle, evidently the sliding-door of a cage, across which was tumbling a pair of dice. A surprising amount of money, considering the quality of those engaged, was visible; but at my appearance it was swept from view and the dice vanished with a ludicrous rapidity. I was subjected to a suspicious, even threatening scrutiny, and then a hoarse voice urged:

"Go on. He's harmless."

The money was returned and a man, about Samuel Fids' age, in a vermilion shirt, picturesque trousers, and a leather-banded hat slanted across a lean, dark countenance, prepared to roll the dice. There was an answering chorus: "I go five. Two. The other three." Breathing into his closed hand he exclaimed, flinging out the dice: "Eighter from Decatur." He invoked chance monotonously to the practised sweep of his hand. Then he added: "Read them and weep." Five and three were exposed. He had made his point and won again.

The game ended in a bitter and doubting cursing; the dice must be loaded, shaved.

The winner rose, calmly pocketing the ivory cubes dotted in black. As he stood his gaze reached out across the dark-green valley, a cup of utter quiet, rosily clouded with blossom, with twisting, silver ribbons of water and slow-moving Jersey cows on the powdered gold of dandelions, inundated with the hush of approaching twilight. He drew in a long, deep breath, followed by a sigh of mingled contentment and longing. His attitude had such an air of unconscious self-revelation that, with a feeling of invading his privacy, I turned away. Looking back later from my stile I could just distinguish the redness of his shirt; he had not moved.

Annie McKee was coming actively down the road, a slight girl with glinting hair and the flutter of a recognition of my waved greeting; and there was Samuel Fids with the cows gathered for milking.

Dinner had ended, and I was looking idly across the table—on which the candle-light was still pale in a subdued, shadowless radiance—at the leafy reach beyond the opened door.

The road was very old, and the barn was old stone and weathered wood; for two centuries the ground had been cultivated. It was steeped in the tradition of its neighbourhood, of wheat and corn and grazing; of such Mays as this, Indian summer, and high-drifted snow. I was thinking how admirable the domestic, temperate seclusion was when squarely across the grass swung the solemn progress of three immense, ponderous elephants. They formed a line, with trunks curled about the tails of those preceding them, while the man in the brilliant shirt—I recognised him immediately—walked with a palm laid on a leathery flank.

They were going to the trough for water, and, as they approached, there was a feverish, outraged squawking of scattered hens, and a barking of dogs, caught up from point to point into the faint distance. A more amazing invasion had never been contrived than the spectacle of the elephants drinking beside the barn as Samuel Fids and their attendant met in conversation. The great animals were satisfied a long while before that talk ended; they passed their trunks in uneasy curiosity over the ground, and poured dust and straw on their dusty backs. Then awkwardly shuffling into line they passed on up towards the tents. It was appreciably darker; the elephants were blurred in bulk; they assumed the aspect of a fantastic dream, and left a memory disturbed by the unpredictable possibilities of such remote accidents of contrast.

Soon after I saw Annie McKee by the glimmering of the post-box; Samuel Fids' hurried approach was then audible, and together they turned in the direction of the circus. The organ was burdening the evening with its shrill melancholy, and the humming tents were visibly illuminated by the dull glow of interior flares.

I heard, rather than saw, Annie and Samuel Fids return; the customary period of lingering by the roadside was reduced to a bare formality, and he came away even slower than I remembered. It was unusual, too, for him to turn in at my drive; but he had evidently seen my lighted cigar and wished to discuss the feats he had witnessed. Samuel managed the brief, grudging salutation of his kind and fell into a gloomy silence at the raised end of the porch. What he finally said was almost as surprising as the unheralded appearance of the elephants.

"A man's a fool to hitch himself up to a woman and a lot of troubles." I suspected at first that something was acutely wrong with his affair of the heart; but, speaking further, he showed me that that organ had no place in the direction of his mood. "Take me," he continued with a brusque gesture, and then stopped. "What have I seen? Nothing. I was brought up here on a farm, and here I've stuck. I don't know what's going on in San Francisco or China. I have never had a real gay time, not what you would name gay. Kissing a girl at a strawberry festival or getting drunk in town on Saturday night—what do they amount to?" He paused in interrogation, but I was unable to express

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the depth or value of his pleasures. "Now here I am getting myself married, and—good-night."

It was clear that he had been upset by the circus, by that picturesque vermilion shirt, and the elephants in the barn yard. Samuel Fids had been stirred to the thought, the necessity, of romance. He had been caught in that inarticulate rebellion of young men against age and impotence and death—yes, against women. Recalling out of the darkness his heavy features and dull gaze, such a longing seemed hardly more than grotesque.

Characteristically he turned his aroused spite on Annie McKee.

I found a knot of men gathered about a metal rectangle, evidently the sliding-door of a cage, across which was tumbling a pair of dice.—

She was, he admitted, sharp, but she needn't think that he knew nothing of the way she met boys at the street corners. Not that she wasn't, when it came down to it, straight. "And this damn' farming," he burst out with renewed heat; "you plant and plant, and work and work, for a hailstorm to cut everything to pieces, or for a late frost or for a flood. And as for cows——" he stopped, gathered his resources, and made

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—A surprising amount of money, considering the quality of those engaged, was visible. [Page 274, col. 2.]

the most libellous remarks possible about those indispensable animals.

"But it ain't that," he added moodily; "it's not what you have, but what you haven't. Take that fellow who came down to the barn; why, there's nothing that boy hasn't done." I had a swift memory of the latter rising from the dice and gazing hungrily into the peace of the valley. "He has been to Asia and bull-fights and Mexico, and soldiered and all. I'll bet he knows some girls, rich girls in diamonds, with lace stockings and yellow hair."

As he talked he destroyed progressively all the beauty of the abstract longing for freedom; what he wanted was girls with yellow hair, the unrestrained licentious. Yet this, as well as the other, was planted in men—dreams and disease, and splendid courage and infamy and celestial purity. It was a toss-up which emerged. He cleared his throat and spat.

"I guess I'll wander along and see them move out." Samuel Fids stirred, and disappeared in the direction of the struck tents.

II.

In the morning the circus had disappeared as mysteriously as it had arrived; the rise crowned by its tents was empty against the tree-tops of the town and the sky. The robins had stopped their singing through the brightness of the day, the cows were scattered along the willows that bordered their meadow, and the younger McKees were whirling in a vivacious and soiled garland to a rhyme as old as England.

All this was no preparation for the incredible sight which met me from the field harrowed yesterday by Samuel Fids; the harrowing continued, the familiar roan mare was unchanged; but Samuel, it first seemed, had been converted into an upright, vigorous figure in a vivid red shirt

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and wide felt hat raked across an alert, spare face.

For a moment I stood lost in stupid astonishment; and then, seeing that the course of the labour would bring the harrow by my fence I crossed to await the coming of the startling driver. It was the youthful person of the dice and elephants. For a moment he enjoyed my evident surprise, then he explained.

"I just traded about with that fellow who was here yesterday. He went off with the show, and I've started to be a farmer. I saw the boss up there, and he said it was all one to him, as long as the work got done." In this I recognised an authentic report of Dingman, my eminently practical neighbour. The man went on, putting out a level, sinewy hand: "My name is Jackson Carmenon."

It was difficult not to smile into the face of that serious youth, with his clear, grey eyes and contracted pupils like points of black onyx. It was frankly impossible not to admire his easy strength, the exact and deliberate finish of his carriage and movements. I said idiotically:

"Then you think you'll like it here? Samuel Fids called it hardly living."

His smile was a flash of very perfect teeth.

"Sam wants adventure." His tone had a faintly satirical edge. "Sam wants to see the naughty world. He's a great big boy and wasted on a farm."

That, I agreed impatiently was evident enough; no-one need linger over the psychology of Samuel Fids.

"But you——" I insisted as far as possible.

"I've seen it," he replied. "I have been over about all the jumps. It was fair enough, say a couple or three years ago; but I'm not just what I was. And when you get on, even a little, you'd better manage it in a place like this. The world's hell to beat about in if you're not fit. I had a fall last year that stiffened me up, and my nerve is not what it was. And when I saw this place——"

He broke off.

"Did you take notice of those old birds about the tents," he demanded, "blue with dynamite rum and ready to drop for a throw of dice? Mister," he said, with a shadow across his eyes and voice, "I am scared to death of getting to be one of them."

He absent-mindedly ran a sensitive palm down a leg of the mare.

"That will need embrocation," he announced to the animal; "yes, and it looks like a quarter crack below. We must burn it out and do a little riveting."

"There are no elephants here," I reminded him.

"I always felt like a nigger prince fooling with them," he admitted. "They tried to get a turban on me, and green cheese cloth; but I held out at that. I told the manager I was a man like he was, and he couldn't make me into an Arabian Night."

He climbed into the iron saddle of the harrow and tightened the reins.

"I reckon we'll see each other often," he said over his shoulder; "I'm here to stay."

His face was lighted by the smile imminent behind his gravity.

"The thought of that Sam Fids kind of tickles me," he called back.

Throughout the day I had glimpses of his vivid figure moving up and down the field, and the circling, pastoral beauty of the country-side seemed like the setting of a Greek amphitheatre for his lonely endeavour. He whistled persistently and gaily, and once, when I was outside, I heard him singing an extremely reprehensible song.

When our ways met, he stopped with a direct greeting—he had none of Samuel Fids' resentment of my comparative leisure—and we exchanged the commonplaces of the hour.

"Well," I asked him oftener than not, "how is it going?" He invariably replied that this was the life.

"I don't mean," he specified on one occasion, "that I like it now. Not yet; but I will. I'm speaking general'." He was limping slightly, the first time that I had noticed the stiffness of which he had spoken. "I've got to go smack up against it. Infernally hard," he muttered.

The amazing thing was that he had managed to stay for a month. He whistled a little, but I saw that his mouth was set and the melody forced.

"I stopped going into town in the evening," he went on abruptly. "If you are going to stand this, you've got to do it right down to the ground. It's like roping and throwing yourself. But there's those old devils——"

The thought of such human wreckage, the sharp spur of pride, brought out the determination of his jaw.

Jackson—to call him that had been inevitable—fell into the habit of stopping at my terrace for a cigarette in the evening. We sat for the most part silent, intent on the short, clumsy flights of the owls; but occasionally he spoke of that past when he had been over virtually all the jumps.

"At that time," he concluded a narrative,

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"I was playing professional polo." I admitted my ignorance of this development of a game supposed to form the recreation of millionaires. "We went through the West," he informed me. "I've played in China and the Philippines. After that I rode for Mr. Mountjoy's stable—steeplechases. A little flat racing, too. The regular thing. I soon got heavy. I have worked in billiard-saloons, bars, lead-mines, moving-pictures, lumber-camps, menageries, circuses, revival-meetings, the bull-ring—in Sonora."

"None satisfied you?"

"Not one. I suppose I was what you'd call no good. But I'm fixed here. I am through." As he spoke he produced some dice from a pocket, idly rattling them in a hand; and I saw that he had three.

"I thought you played—isn't it called rolling the bones?—with two." He hesitated perceptibly, and then replied:

"You're supposed to. Nobody does. Yes, one of these is shaved." His face was expressionless in the last glow of day. "It's like this: you want to score seven or eleven on the first throw, and this one will turn up four near every time. Then the three is easy. Of course, you have to make a change when you pass them on."

My condemnation of this must have been evident in my gaze, for immediately he hardened; his lips were compressed into a contemptuous line. While actually he had moved in a second, he seemed to have withdrawn from my neighbourhood. He waited silently for what I might have to say further.

At last I said rather irritably, annoyed by my impotence, and yet without any desire to mask my actual opinion:

"It's a coward's game."

"Now, there's where you're wrong," he replied energetically. "You get with that crowd at the circus and palm your dice with every one wise himself and watching you. Any fool can lose his money; the thing is to keep it and get the rest. Why, they all do it. Do you know racing at all, or the games these college boys play, or—or——" Words failed before the pressure of his earnest conviction. "Did you ever get a straight glass of beer, one that wasn't a third suds? And as for your friends, the big business men, they haven't got you kidded, have they?"

"No." I defended my experience shortly. "I can see as well as yourself. I'm not commonly called an optimist. At the same time it's plain to me that three dice, in a game of two, is the evasion of a man afraid to face the facts. You agree to try to throw seven or eleven under given conditions. That's your undertaking; and if you drop in a third, shaved to make you safe, you have dodged the issue, declined to accept the chance. Did you ever personally drug a horse?"

He rose and cursed me with a swift passion that almost re-established him at the top of my favour.

"Keep your hair on," I put in when he had ended; "it's not very different from the other." They were, he asserted, as far apart as heaven and hell.

"Why, a horse has no choice; he's got to take whatever you plug in him. A horse'll trust you. Where's the man that will do that? It's turn about with them."

Jackson shifted the dice in his hand and rolled, on the flagstones, seven; he produced that number five times consecutively, and then dropped the dice back into his pocket. I put in:

"At least, and you may think of it as a favour, limit yourself to the conventional game about here."

III.

It was on Sunday afternoon, in the sudden profound gloom of an impending storm, that he helped me to secure some deck-chairs thrown into confusion by the wind. We stood, finally, behind the solid granite angle of my house watching the furious slashing and swaying of leafy branches. The yellow-black bank of cloud in the west swiftly unrolled, and in a minute more there was the heavy, diagonal impact of the crystal shock of rain. The valley dissolved in the shining flood, the rain broadened in a sheet over the lawn, and the deep gutters of the roads were filled with brimming streams.

Almost immediately it passed, and the sun flashed like a shower of golden spears cast into the incredible greenery. The clear note of a field lark rose, and the McKee children rocketed out from their contracted dwelling. Jackson had discarded his vermilion jacket for a garb so stiffly ugly that it could have come only from the standardised shelf of a local shop. Yet he gave even that harsh, ill-cut material a decided air of distinction, while any hat he wore must of itself have assumed an engaging angle.

"I have been thinking of those dice," he said without preliminary, "and I can't just make up my mind about them. At times it looks as if following your idea would be the same as trying to swim with your arms tied; and then it seems there might be something in it. That's new to me about being afraid."

"You think I can win with two dice," he

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Jackson Carmenon gazed with an amused interest at Annie—

proceeded slowly; "I can see that all right. Good or bad don't come into it. Well"—he awkwardly thrust out a hand—"I can." His grasp left my fingers tingling and bloodless.

"It's a kind of gamble with myself," he explained, "and I'm not shedding any sorrowful tears over the past. Then, in a way, you're in it. If you insist such a lot on a straight game—why, I——"

Embarrassment claimed him. I had never had a more direct and invigorating compliment, and, keenly affected, I immediately cast around for a saving triviality. Annie McKee had come down to the road; she was in a fresh white dress, with a gay ribbon at her waist, and the manner of her walk, her self-conscious indifference, showed that she was not unaware of our presence.

"You have taken Sam Fids' place and responsibilities," I told Jackson, "but there is something you have overlooked—Sam's girl. From all indications he was about to marry her when he left with the circus."

Jackson Carmenon gazed with an amused interest at Annie.

"She's fair enough, too," he commented, "from here. I noticed her going in and out of town. That fellow never guessed what a lucky devil he was. I'll have to look this Annie over; a man ought to be married here if he's going to amount to anything. It is in the air and the bird-nests. When you're done work you just naturally think of coming in to a tidied-up little kitchen and a girl and sitting through the evening by a door with a climbing-rose."

This unexpectedly lyric outburst entertained me and then sank from memory until, soon after, I saw him standing with Annie McKee by the whitewashed post on the bank. Their attitudes were precisely the same as when Jackson's place had been filled by Samuel Fids. The slightly nervous ring of Annie's laughter was identical.

I had now grown fond of Jackson Carmenon in a personal way, and I recalled what Samuel had said of Annie and the town boys; but it was not so much that as it was her perfect willingness to accept one man after the other, for it soon became evident that she had entirely accepted Jackson. He told me:

"Annie never really liked Fids; he was around here, convenient, and there was nothing more to it. There's a shack on the hill the old man says we can have, and I'm fixing it up."

Decently he said nothing about his affection, but I could see that he was enormously absorbed in the domestic scene Annie made possible. All his emotion, captivated at the psychological hour, was drawn to her.

Her unstable laughter, even the grave murmur of his voice, drifted up from the darkness of their meeting-place. If anything my disturbance increased at the purely automatic quality of Annie McKee's love. Like the use of a shaved third dice it lacked the dignity necessary to the preservation of some beauty in human existence.

Probably Annie McKee would marry Carmenon, and with a brood as large and dirty as her mother's they would soon grow perfunctory. He would fall into the habit of lingering in town on Saturday nights, to come home unsteadily and perhaps beat her. This sordid vision made me melancholy at the possibility that what I demanded was fantastic; that, after all, men and cattle were one.

This conviction swept over me talking to Annie McKee in the road that dipped between our respective habitations.

She was obviously pretty and at the absolute zenith of her appeal, with her at early seventeen. Her dress, as usual, was crisply ironed and clean, with a brightness of ribbons, and the instinctive twist of her hair brought out its greatest effectiveness. An

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affair of colour, the pure radiance of youth—that gone and the coarseness of her features, her slightly protruding lips, the shrewish pucker of her gaze, and her awkward flatness would be increasingly apparent.

But now she was arrogant in the confidence of her power to charm.

"I suppose you've heard," she said with a giggle, "that Sam is back?" I hadn't, and her announcement gave me a most d sagreeable surprise. "Last night," she went on, "I didn't have a chance to talk to him; he hollered to me and that was all. I s'pose he was disappointed in those circus girls. The brassy things!"

She had confined her remarks to the queens of the sawdust and cantering, fat white horses, but her meaning was plain; her entire person expressed the belief that Samuel Fids had found it impossible to exist away from her favour. It was my opinion that his return had been brought about by a more inclusive order of events, and this Samuel, lounging sullenly against a pillar of my small portico, supported.

"Seeing the world!" he exclaimed sarcastically. "Seeing the back sides of towns—that was more like it. And on food not fit for pigs. Why, those there nigger-drivers sweat the life out of you in a week. If I had stayed a day more someone would have had his head caved in." He continued with a frank opinion of the "queens," coloured, to say the least, by extreme prejudice.

"What are you going to do?"

"Nothing just now. I've been up to Dingman, but he wouldn't give me my job back." Dingman really was admirable. "It looks as if that fellow I favoured done me out of my rights."

"Was there any agreement between you that you should have the place back at demand?"

"Not in so many words," he admitted; "but it stands to reason that's what I meant. Maybe you'll see me around, anyhow; he might leave all of a sudden."

Remembering Jackson Carmenon, I doubted this extremely. Samuel was a big hulk of a man, hardened by toil and weathered by exposure; but he had none of the other's keenness or beauty of co-ordination.

—"She's fair enough, too," he commented, "from here. . . . I'll have to look this Annie over."

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"I've heard more, too," he added darkly, "and all I want is to see him once about Annie. That's all I want."

The next morning I kept an interested look-out for Jackson; I saw him more than once, but he was in the distance, and I had no opportunity to speak to him then. Late in the afternoon a figure advancing into the secluded little valley proved to be Samuel Fids. Jackson was in the pasture among the cows; and the former, slowly climbing the fence, went up through the deep, rough grass. The two men met just below the crown of the hill, and stood talking for a period that was suddenly ended by a lunge of Samuel's fist.

They were an appreciable distance away from me, so far that their features were lost; and, locked together in a whirling struggle, their bodies were merged. The effect was strange in that, with the minor brutalities of the fight hidden, it seemed more than anything yet to be merely symbolical. They rolled over the ground, with momentarily free legs and jabbing arms, among the disconcerted cows, with the appearance of a contest between Jackson Carmenon's disembodied spirit and the forces of evil.

But the contagion of primitive battering impulse was quickly established in me, and, rigid with painful intensity, I hoped that Jackson would utterly spoil Samuel Fids. He didn't. After a surprising duration of effort, considering its velocity, the fight ended. The men fell apart, with Samuel's hand—I could barely distinguish—raised to his face. Then Samuel went back down the hill; he stiffly climbed the fence, and disappeared in the direction of the parental Fids' acres.

Jackson's countenance, as well, I saw later, was bruised, and one eye had a foolish, drooping expression; but his poise was undisturbed.

"I'll get that farmer the next time," he asserted. "He won't walk away. It seems he didn't like what he saw of things—the great big boy. It was Annie throwing him over that put the devil in him. Think of little Annie McKee marrying that!"

I was forced to turn away from a contentment hardly short of the fatuous.

"We can't get married too soon to suit me, but I expect I'll have to 'tend to Sam first. He gave notice he'd be back. I had a chance to roll in a third dice on him up there—there's a good deal he doesn't know about fighting to stay alive—but I didn't. I'm sort of taken by this foolishness of playing a game straight. And I am beginning to understand what you meant by being afraid; it was a good way to put it."

He left, different from Samuel Fids, with the upright swing, a swagger almost, he had carried over from his roving, and I saw him, or rather thought that it was he, an hour later by the post-box. I was coming quietly down the road from town, and before I realised my situation, I was abreast of a dim, white feminine shape, mostly eclipsed by the night and a comprehensive masculine embrace. Annie broke away, with her metallic, nervous laugh, at which, to cover my incidental confusion, I made a cheerfully inane remark to the supposed Carmenon. But the answering mutter, the heave of a heavy body in the gloom, belonged to Samuel Fids.

Here was an extreme development of the quality of mischief in Annie McKee.

What made the situation unbearable was the knowledge that nothing on earth could be done for Jackson Carmenon. Just as he summed up for me a larger affair than his personal fate, so Annie held for Jackson all that he desired. She was to him the valley and accomplishment. In brief, he was in love with her; or, rather, with the Annie McKee his necessity and romantic youth constructed from the meagre actuality.

I couldn't tell him that I had seen her in Samuel Fids' arms without inviting murder, not very far away at best, and I couldn't coldly, logically explain that she was worthless. It was obvious that in any case at all she was of great worth to him.

Now, loosely seated in a chair by the low, grey façade of my house, he was, I thought, darker than customary, grim rather than grave, with spare cheeks, and a mouth set in a line that made me specially glad of the fact that I was not Samuel Fids.

He said little beyond the remarks that he had bought Annie a ring with a diamond in it, and that they were to be married soon—next month, it seemed. I suddenly wished that the ceremony was over, and a conventionality established sufficient in itself to rid us of Fids. The thought of him, made potent by Annie's character, increasingly disturbed me.

Jackson Carmenon rose, and, as he departed towards the barn, I recognised the singular magnificence of the night, a breathless dark burning with stars; not the stupid, five-pointed objects of art, but constellations of worlds shimmering with silver fire. It was so still that even in the heavy August air sounds were audible from far away, and the passionate, half-shouted phrase that whipped from across the road might have been cried directly into my ear.

It was the voice of Dingman pronouncing

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Fids' name; and with no pretence of controlling my anxiety, I crossed hastily to where a lantern cast a reddish illumination on Jackson, Sam Fids, and my neighbour. Dingman, by the mere force of his small, but aggressive, being, was dominating a situation which promised to be the realisation of my worst fears. Samuel, it developed, appropriately enough to himself, had attacked Carmenon with a pitch-fork.

Dingman, luckily, had fearlessly caught the handle of the fork; Samuel was smouldering in an incoherent rage; but Jackson was absolutely contained. He had the air of a man overtaken by a crushing misfortune—the knowledge that the killing of Fids lay before him.

"This nonsense 'll stop right here," Dingman continued. "One or the other of you has to go and stay gone. I don't care which. The only thing slaughtered on my place will be the pigs. There's work to be done by somebody. I don't want any cripples about, either; so take your choice—quick."

Such a simple, normal solution, however, was impossible now. Dingman realised this.

"I tell you what," he added; "Jackson, you're so taken with throwing dice—and a born gambler always has 'em with him—roll them once to see if you or Sam stays. But, mind me, you'll have to keep to them."

Actually I was chilled by the accident that had faced Jackson Carmenon with such a profound problem, a temptation heavy with what he conceived to be his whole future happiness. He gazed at me in a frowning concentration while his hand explored a pocket. Then he studied the two white, gleaming dice which lay on his palm.

Samuel Fids, in a voice still labouring with excitement, obviously relieved by this possibility of escape from the consequences of his murderous effort, announced his entire willingness to hold to such a decision.

The others thought that Carmenon was hesitating in the acceptance of the proposed chance, but I knew that his trouble was far different; he was silently debating the importance, here, of the simple honesty, the attitude of bravery, he had taken with me.

I understood enough of the proposed game to follow its course. If, at the first roll, eleven or seven—that seven he could so easily command—turned up, he won; but if two, three, or the double six was exposed, he lost. The remainder was clear; if any other number occurred, he must roll it again before seven, now calamitous, was visible.

"Very well," he said absent-mindedly, after, to me at least, an intolerable delay.

It might be well enough or very bad indeed, for if he evaded his commitment and managed to turn up a seven at once, what, after all, had he gained? The pity of our position was that even now I could not give him the benefit of my wider comprehension. He must think of Annie McKee as the supremely desirable goal of all endeavour.

"Very well," he repeated. He glanced swiftly, keenly, at the dice he held, then maddeningly he plunged them back into his pocket.

Jackson withdrew his hand, and, in a flinging gesture of sharp decision, he shot the dice out upon the hardened clay by the lantern. All four of us bent a breathless concentration on the revealed numerals.

"There," Samuel Fids cried, "he's lost! And he's got to stand by it. That beat him."

Carmenon had rolled three, and lost.

He straightened up and turned towards me with a bitter expression that was vanquished by a fatalistic calm at what had by chance defeated him. His mouth resumed its straight line above a jaw clean like the point of a sword.

I heard, hardly audible above his breath, the whisper, "Read them and weep." Then, without any warning phrase, he strode away from us—eternally, I knew—from the valley and was absorbed in the splendid night. The honest dice shone in minute gleams on the black earth, and to me they were as brilliantly silver as the highest stars to which men not hopelessly aspired.

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How I Would Bring Up a Boy.

By Elinor Glyn.

Illustrated by Gladys Peto.

This month Mrs Glyn deals in her usual sympathetic style with the problem of bringing up a boy. Her advice should be of great service to all mothers who recognise the value of early training in moulding their sons' characters.

THERE is a proverb about "Bachelors' wives and old maids' children," and as I have no sons, alas! only daughters, it may be thought, perhaps, that I have no right to speak upon this subject. But, as a matter of fact, I have studied the bringing up of boys just as carefully as that of girls, and have made deductions from the methods of my friends. And there is another proverb which assures us that "lookers-on see most of the game!" Let us add, if they are intelligent and out to learn.

The home training of boys up to the time when they go to their first school is, if anything, more important than that of girls, because later they will be so much absent from the mother's influence that she must lay the foundations of all the basic virtues and points of view that she wishes them to acquire for after life in these few short years. Again I must quote, as I did in my first article, the Jesuits' axiom, that if they have a boy with them until he is seven they have no fear for his moral training afterwards. But I would make the age that at which he goes to his private school. In some ways it may not be so difficult a task altogether as to bring up a girl, because of the public school life of boys, and the great influence for good that its training exercises upon character, but this does not lessen the mother's responsibility as regards home training.

As boys are stronger in personality as a rule than girls, and more insistent in asserting themselves, so the mother's thought for them should be the more watchful. Every subtle tendency should be known to her—whether the boy is weak or strong of will, in what direction his tastes lie, what hereditary tendencies he may display, whether he is naturally brave and straightforward, or whether he is timid and so more likely to be deceitful, whether he is very sensitive or the reverse, whether he is generous or mean. She should make a minute study of all these things, and use all her influence in the most loving way to eradicate the faults and encourage the good qualities, explaining always, as with a girl, the law of cause and effect, and the reason why she wants James to improve.

From earliest infancy chivalry towards

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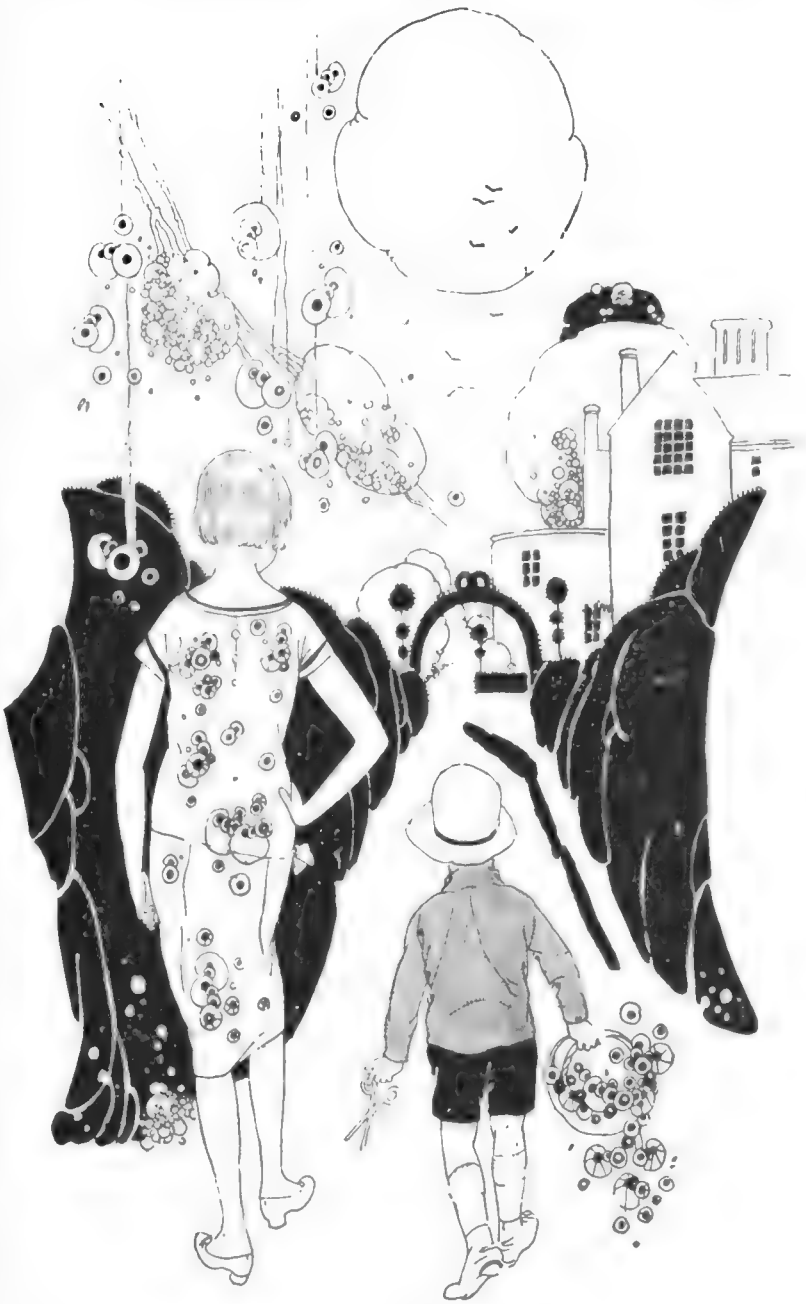
women should be inculcated; perfect manners to mother and nurse, and brothers and sisters, should be insisted upon, and his imagination appealed to, so that the little man feels proud in being gallant to his womenfolk.

What horrid little bores badly brought-up boys can be, imposing their selfish tiresomeness upon everyone! rude to their mothers and domineering over their sisters, interrupting conversation with incessant questions, and showing temper at once when thwarted, and all because no firm *nursery discipline* was insisted upon, and nothing really explained in earliest years.

Some mothers allow adoration for their sons to militate against any good training they might have been intelligent enough to give them if they had controlled their own emotion and used reason, and James from the beginning feels he can sacrifice his mother and sisters to his own pleasure.



Chivalry should be taught from earliest infancy, so that the small boy will take a pride in being gallant to his womenfolk.

In England, unfortunately, the question of numbers encourages all boys to selfishness. There are so many more females than males, and the general family point of view is that the boys must have first place, the exact contrary to the situation in America, where all boys are made to give way to their sisters and mothers, and so grow up into very unselfish men; too unselfish and slavishly subservient to the caprices of women, some people think, but there is a *juste milieu*, surely, which should be the ideal to strive for.

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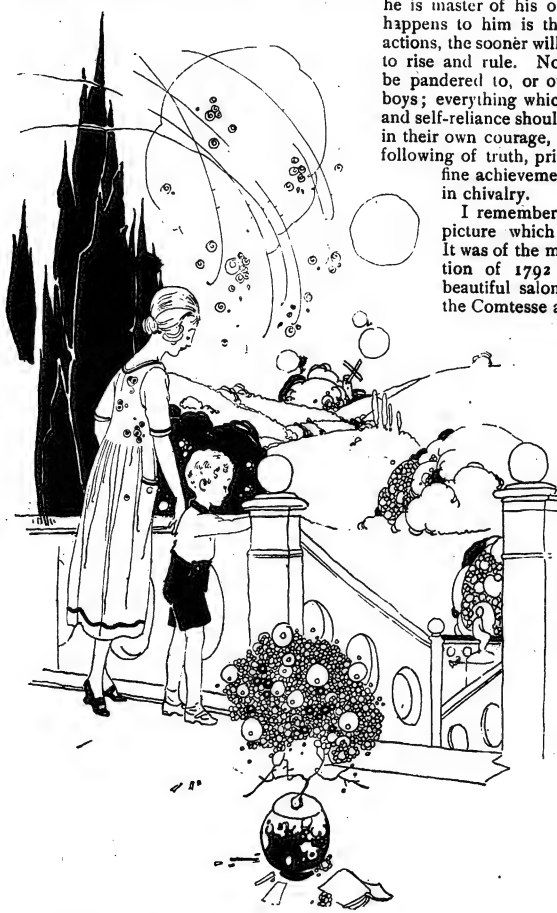
Nothing much can be done with men when they are once grown up, but everything can be accomplished if the aim of the mother is the same from the boy's birth until he leaves her care—*i.e.*, in every way to make him into a fine, manly character, and a perfect little gentleman, understanding in every relation of life what is and is not "cricket."

She should never allow him to retain foolish illusions upon things, or to remain ignorant of temptations, but should see that he has always a pure ideal held up to him.

From earliest times a sense of personal responsibility should be persistently inculcated. If James is not popular with his brothers and sisters and playmates, he should realise it is not their fault, but his own in some way, and the cause should be searched for and analysed, and then new methods taught him. The sooner a boy learns that he is master of his own fate, and that what happens to him is the outcome of his own actions, the sooner will he use his intelligence to rise and rule. No silly weakness should be pandered to, or over-pampering given to boys; everything which can teach manliness and self-reliance should be developed. Pride in their own courage, pride in their fearless following of truth, pride in fine thinking and fine achievement, and above all pride in chivalry.

I remember once seeing a French picture which touched me greatly. It was of the mob in the great revolution of 1792 bursting into a very beautiful salon in Paris, where stood the Comtesse and her little daughters, crouched in a corner. In front of them there had stepped forward a tiny boy of eight, perhaps, with fearless hauteur marked upon his little face, and courage in every line. He had drawn his minute sword, and was there protecting his mother and sisters. The crowd had halted in half-admiring astonishment, although their dreadful faces and threatening attitudes might have terrified anyone.

The picture was simply called "Monsieur le Comte." It expressed everything which "*noblesse oblige*" should mean. "Monsieur le Comte" *must* behave himself like a courageous gentleman, even at



Even in the rush of modern life, a mother should find leisure to superintend her son's training and share his childish pursuits.

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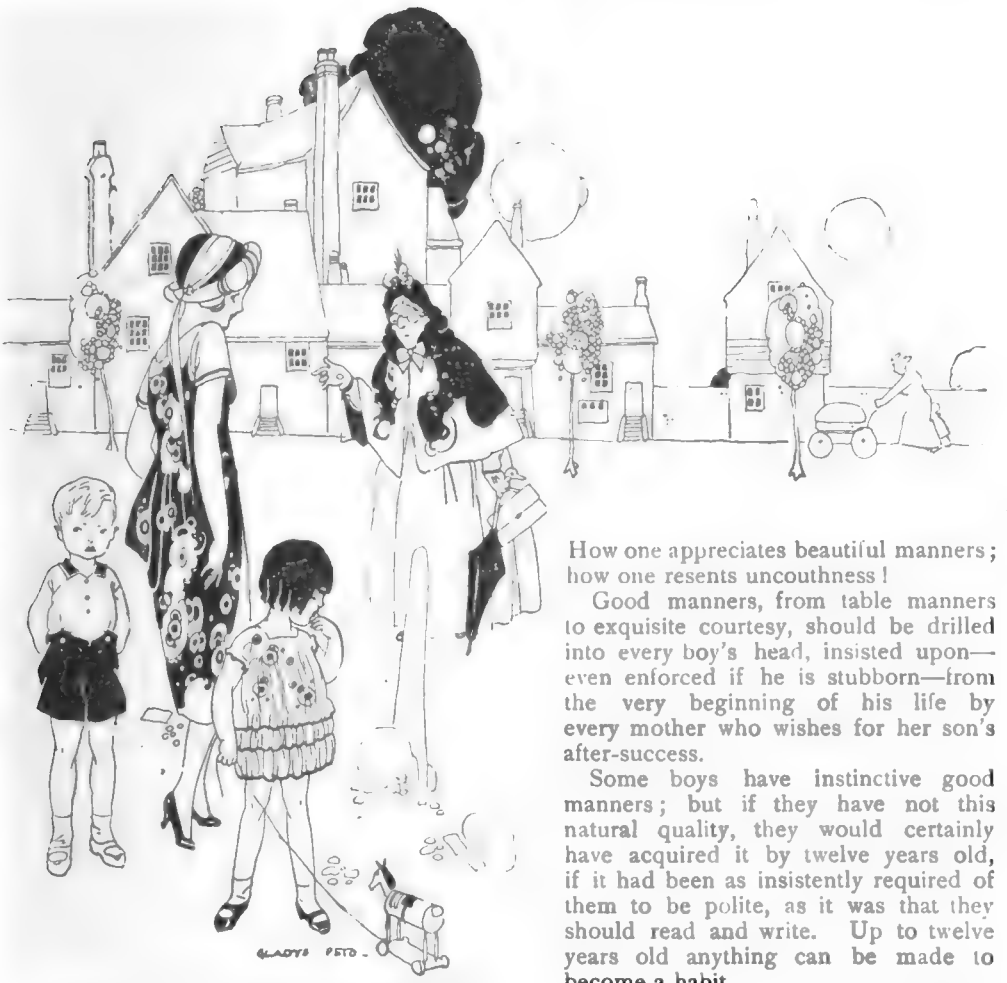

The little boy who is always asking questions should not be repressed, but he should be taught that it is not polite to worry his mother when guests are present.
[*Page* 288, *col.* 1.]

eight years old, and his duty was to protect the women of his family! "Monsieur le Comte" could not fail in courage or chivalry—his *instinct* was too strong.

And this same spirit lies dormant in the majority of boys, and only wants waking up in earliest years by their mothers to remain the guiding principle of their after-lives.

Chivalry to women—pride in their own power to protect and defend them!

This may seem an old-fashioned point of view, considering the sturdy, self-assertive modern maidens, but because women have grown unattractive and aggressive, is no reason for men to relax a virtue on their side. A truly chivalrous man is always adored and looked up to by women even in these days.

"Manners maketh the man" is so true! How one appreciates beautiful manners; how one resents uncouthness!

Good manners, from table manners to exquisite courtesy, should be drilled into every boy's head, insisted upon—even enforced if he is stubborn—from the very beginning of his life by every mother who wishes for her son's after-success.

Some boys have instinctive good manners; but if they have not this natural quality, they would certainly have acquired it by twelve years old, if it had been as insistently required of them to be polite, as it was that they should read and write. Up to twelve years old anything can be made to become a habit.

In the rush of modern life, parents have not much time for their children, as a rule, but it seems to me that giving them a suitable training should come before any pleasure of their own or any personal aim. What right have parents to bring these souls into the world, and then let them fend for themselves as to morals and manners, feeling satisfied if they have provided only for their physical wants?

You will think, perhaps, that I am harping too long upon this question of manners, and neglecting the more serious points, but to me this knowledge of perfect manners is, next to the knowledge of the value of truth, the most important for a boy to acquire. The public school grafts on to him so many excellent ideas and habits of thought, that in this article I wish only to insist upon the aspects which I have noticed are supremely important to a man. Numbers of careers have been spoilt by uncouth manners, when

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every one of the moral qualities has been excellent. Cubbish, sullen ungraciousness! It puts employers off, it puts women off, it militates against success.

Of two young men with equal abilities, ask yourself, which would be likely to obtain a situation: a polished, polite, courteous William or a surly, ill-mannered James?

Every personal refinement should be taught small boys, who are prone to rather revolting little ways of eating and other unpleasant things. Any disagreeable habit they seem to be picking up should be instantly checked while they are at the malleable stage. It will be hopeless to try later on.

And, above all, why you are checking anything must be explained to them.

If a boy is incessantly asking questions, it shows that he has a mind seeking for knowledge, and this should not be repressed. The questions should always be answered; only if they are put when strangers and guests are present, it should be explained to James afterwards that he has no right to bore others with his wants or push himself forward, and that he must wait to ask until he is alone with his parents. But if he has been instructed from infancy in unselfishness and good manners, he will not be troublesome in company.

James's senses of sight and hearing should be cultivated from the beginning, and all the deductive principles taught him, so that he will acquire method in judgment as a habit, and not rush off at a tangent. He should be taught to face every problem squarely, having had the large part which vanity plays in all human beings thoroughly explained to him.

The process of analysis should be absolutely drummed into the head of a boy until it becomes his habit of mind. There are some who may say: "But you would destroy any originality or impulse with such a method." Not at all! any more than learning the intricate rules of harmony at an early age when drudgery can accomplish tiresome things spoils a musician's talent and impulse when he wishes to compose in after life. On the contrary, such knowledge enables him to let his inspiration run free, unhampered by ignorance of method in how to carry out his inspirations. And it is thus with a boy's brain.

If up to twelve he is daily taught the law of cause and effect, and trained to use deduction and analysis over the simplest problems and the greatest ones he, will be equipped with an inestimable benefit for all his after-life.

Most mothers' principle with their sons is to shower love and devotion upon them and unconsciously to make them as selfish as possible, never really to teach them about the principles of sex, and the temptations which are bound to come to them if they are strong and healthy and normal, but just to bring them up in a fool's paradise, with the mistaken notion that indiscriminate kindness is all that is necessary for them.

If mothers really thought out what they desire for the future of their sons, and what was likely to help them to achieve it, and what not, they would never go along this happy-go-lucky road of drift.

Whenever I hear of these boys "going to the bad" in families, great and small, making unfortunate marriages, degrading their names, and disgracing their order, I always feel it must be in some measure the mother's fault. If from infancy the law of the boomerang had been explained to them (*i.e.*, that which you send out must return to you again), and a high ideal of honour and pride in their race, and in fine achievement, indelibly engraven upon their subconscious minds during the impressionable period, they might have had strength, or at lowest cunning enough, to keep them straight, realising that to go crooked can never be worth while.

Hereditary traits are sometimes too strong in boys for anything finally to stand against them, but surely it would give them a better chance of success if they had received the training at the period when habits of mind and body were forming, and when they had been enabled to reason with themselves about what they must know is crooked in their own characters?

I would recommend every mother and father to study most carefully Chesterfield's "Letters to his Son," a book which in the Victorian period was considered highly immoral, because that age was one of supreme hypocrisy. Because a few of Lord Chesterfield's views were coloured with the eighteenth-century cynicism, they dismissed the whole of them as pernicious!

We people of the twentieth century are broader-minded, and so I can safely recommend this admirable work of worldly wisdom and true common-sense to every mother nowadays who wants to train her boy well, trusting that she will have intelligence enough to profit by the gems of wisdom scattered all through it. One has always understood that Chesterfield's son did not greatly profit by this teaching, which proves that maxims, however good, are of no avail without personal influence. The boy probably hated receiving the epistles, and became stubborn.

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The book should be studied by the parents for their own instruction, and then the wise counsel contained therein imparted to the boy in a suitable manner. No matter how lofty the aim of a mother may be, or how desirous she may be of training her boy to be all that is chivalrous and noble, she will not succeed if she uses antagonising methods. Therefore, tact is absolutely necessary, and that loving sympathy that senses and avoids jars.

Vanity prevents many mothers from seeing the truth about their sons; they throw dust in their own eyes. Their offspring must be perfect, and they will not read the writing upon the wall, so that the boy's welfare is sacrificed to their own selfishness.

If tiny male creatures show very great affection and emotion, if they are easily reduced to tears and show real tenderness to animals, the mother should know they will be much easier preys for the harpy type of woman later on, and should train them accordingly.

People of either sex of strong affections are capable of being led to the highest good, but, on the other hand, are open to very great dangers. Nothing but minute explanation of the results that follow lack of self-control will aid them. Convince their common-sense of the necessity of this, and give great encouragement and praise at every victory.

If the boy were mine, and I saw that he was emotional and of a passionate temperament from infancy, I would explain exactly where this would lead him, and arouse pride in self-conquest and in being master of his feelings.

I would teach him to read character in others, to stand back and reason with himself before giving a judgment, and would inspire his imagination by showing him the power strong characters wield in after-life.

I knew a little boy who from babyhood had always known his own mind. If one asked him, "Do you like jam or cake first?" he did not hesitate and say, "Which do you like?" or, "I don't care"—he replied firmly one or the other. He adored his mother and respected everything she said, but when she had read him an historical story-book, let us say, he would not be biassed in any way by her opinion about the characters in it.

He would get the facts clearly into his head, asking intelligent questions to do this, and then he would announce his opinion deduced from his own impressions. Nothing convinced him but the truth; he unconsciously was uninfluenced by emotion or anyone else's views.

He is growing into a wonderful man now, and will go far. And it is this habit of making decision, assuming personal responsibility and then standing or falling by it, which I would inculcate in every boy from the very beginning, so that he may grow into a strong man, and not a drifter.

The Boy Scout movement ought to produce in time a new and finer race of Englishmen, and, lastly, I would have hung up in every boy's room where he can see it from his bed, a clearly-printed copy of Kipling's "If," the most perfect exposition of what makes a man—and, in my opinion, an immortal poem.

There is no space here to touch upon the different characters of boys and how the groups should be treated, but if the principle has been grasped—that it is the after-life success the mother is aiming at—if she is intelligent, these words I have written may help her to use the right methods with each different son to obtain that end.

Lastly, I would say: Use common-sense always and discourage sentimentality.

("How I Would Educate a Husband" is the subject of Elinor Glyn's next article, which will appear in the March Number.)

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White Hyacinths.

By Christine Castle.

Illustrated by Stanley Davis.

THERE was once an aged gentleman—his name for the moment escapes me—who remarked that if he had only two loaves of bread in the world, he would sell one and buy white hyacinths to feed his soul. It is extremely probable that the aged gentleman, at the time of expressing this praiseworthy sentiment, rejoiced in a dinner-pail heaped up and running over. Dicky Whitney did not. But Dicky was none the less the lineal descendant of that patron of florists' shops, with this distinction, that whereas the aged gentleman fed his soul with the blossoms in question, Dicky fed the delicate vanity of a girl, and held himself lucky to have the price

The girl was fond of flowers. When they overflowed the vases—for Dicky was not the only worshipper—she put them in the bath-tub. She was fond of chiffons—which was no more than natural, considering the redness of her mouth, the duskiness of her hair, the innocence of her eyes, and the slim, straight youngness of her body—but what is far more important, and what, to have done with mystery, is the reason for this tale, she was fond of Dicky.

Whereat Dicky rejoiced and was glad, not knowing that, with each fresh instance of her fondness, the high gods snickered in their sleeves.

Dicky, you see, was a newspaper man, which is, when dead, a journalist, as one of the dead ones has patly remarked; but which is also, when living, a spendthrift, a gambler, and a runner in the race. He had ambitions, that commonly, on being let out for exercise, practised bowing from before a first-night curtain, or ambled along a line of prospective publishers, rejecting coolly the ones who would not offer advance royalties.

When he thrust these ambitions back into their strong box and sat upon the lid, it was usually to toss off with scornful lightness the report of a Socialist meeting in the Square, or to draw from the mouth of some momentary celebrity, as a conjurer draws rabbits from a hat, sentiments which the momentary celebrity, encountering next morning, would recognise but dimly, gasping with delight at his own felicity of expression.

Socialist meetings and interviews with celebrities—coming and going—these were child's play to Dicky. He yearned for wider fields. Each Monday, as he went forth to labour in the dewy noon, he yearned, realising acutely that his Pegasus displayed far too much class for agricultural usage.

But each Saturday night, when the ghost walked, he awaited it upon the ramparts with a conciliatory smile. Which is to say, briefly, that a pay-envelope in the hand is worth fame in the bush. And Dicky continued to wrestle with a typewriter in the City room of the *Morning Herald*.

He was young, and the shackles chafed his wrists; but also he was human, and he had a landlady. Over and beyond which, always, there were the white hyacinths to be bought for the girl.

The girl was not unappreciative. She used to let Dicky make love to her, and she wore his white hyacinths—when they suited her gown. Her name, by the way, was Desirée Foster. Dicky called her "Heart's Desire," and a great many women knew her as "that Foster girl." To the wise this will be sufficient index of her triumphal progress with the other sex.

It was in the second year of her reign, dating from Dicky's complete surrender, that the prize competition occurred—and the big story.

A word of explanation. The prize competition was, after a manner of speaking, an intellectual Marathon, in which, without fear or favour, all comers might be entered regardless of colour, age, weight, or previous condition of servitude. A great magazine announced it, and a large number of the scribbling public girded up their loins at

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once in spontaneous acceptance of the challenge. There were prizes, if you must have the sordid truth, ranging from five hundred down and temptingly graded.

"Suppose I win the first," said Dicky, sublimely arrogant, "a summer abroad, and a comfy little flat when we come home in the autumn. It sounds good—eh?"

"What is the second?" inquired Desirée. She added, incredibly demure: "Mind—I never said I would."

"The second," explained Dicky, quite undisturbed, "is three hundred. Comfy little flat and summer in Cornwall."

Desirée sniffed prettily.

"After that?"

"The also rans," said Dicky, "might be variously converted into a car, a rope of pearls, or a baby grand."

"The first's the only one worth while," said Desirée.

"My point of view exactly," responded Dicky. He said good-bye some ten minutes later and went home to think it over.

About that time he lay awake of mornings and evolved the plot of a masterpiece. Dicky had some familiarity with masterpieces, having at one time or another had stories published in most of the minor magazines. He knew the structure of the creature, therefore, and what should go under the skin of it.

He knew that the real inwardness of success is in art, and the real inwardness of art is in the truth. He had a feeling for the right word, had Dicky, and, thanks to a remote Celtic ancestor, he had the dramatic instinct. On the whole, he was fairly well equipped for the game he desired to play.

The big story came to him full-fledged between dawn and sunrise of a gusty morning in March, and he held his breath when he first took in what he conceived to be the size of it. It was tragedy—sheer, simple, stabbing tragedy—which was to begin, as the cruellest tragedies do, in humorous commonplace and work its way up. It had its inception in a fugitive phrase that Dicky's landlady had winged the evening before, above the bi-weekly roast mutton, and it had its elaboration in Dicky's own fertile consciousness.

After the fashion of Dicky's masterpieces, its title preceded its details into the artist's mind—"Blue Roses" was the name. It has never become a proverb. That, however, Dicky did not foresee. In the grip of an overpowering ecstasy of creation, he wrote three days upon the thing, revised it painfully and repeatedly for two weeks, and, after two more weeks of soul-scarifying question, called it finished. It was a short story in form, a true tale in manner, and a lump in the throat in effect. Dicky had done well, indeed.

When the manuscript was in its complete form he read it to Desirée, wherein he made his first mistake.

Desirée listened. When he came to the end she frowned.

"I hate," she said, "an unhappy ending."

"The only possible ending," he objected, "to this particular story."

"I very much doubt," said Desirée savagely, "if the editor will think so."

The editor, in Dicky's cheerfully-expressed opinion, was an ass. Art was Art, and Truth was Truth, and no pitiful caterer to a Fool Public could alter that.

At this point Desirée interjected with an arresting question:

"How many stories have you sold in the last six months?"

"One," said Dicky grimly.

"And how many have you tried?"

"Eight."

"What did they say about 'Who Travels Alone'?"

"They said it was good," said Dicky, "but too poignantly unhappy—too grim—too unsatisfactory in its conclusion—oh, what the dickens difference does it make? They turned it down everywhere."

"You see?" said Desirée.

"See what?" replied Dicky.

"You've got to write what they want," said Desirée.

Dicky's chin lifted, his black eyes narrowed.

"I'll see 'em—considerably further," he drawled. "I'm going to write what I see for the true thing and the big thing. I'm going to write it as it is—and sooner or later I'm going to sell it to them."

"Probably later," said Desirée sweetly. She had the voice of a cooing dove when she so desired. "Probably very much later. Don't be silly, Dicky. What did they say about 'The Red Flare of Dreams'?"

"Same thing—unhappy ending."

"Why can't you write it over again and change the end?"

"Marry 'em off—with a reek of orange blossoms! I would," said Dicky savagely, "but she dies on the next to the last page. What do you want me to do? Dig her up and call in the parson?"

Desirée shuddered effectively.

"Dicky! how can you be so horrid? What do you make her die for? Good gracious! Aren't there enough unhappy

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people, and tired people, and bad people in the world already? I should think you'd rather write cheerful little things——"

"That," said Dicky, "is what the editor said." He flung out his hands all at once in a hopeless gesture. "Oh, Lord! She *had* to die. It was the whole reason for the story. I wanted to show that he'd only go on loving her so long as he never got her—see? 'Forever wilt thou love and she be fair'—that's Keats' stuff. He was a great man, Keats. But he'd have been in the wrong box with the sunshine purveyors that are cornering the market to-day. Ten to one they'd have made him change that to something like this: 'For ever wilt thou love—but don't forget the wedding bells if thou wantest to get away with it.'"

"You're awfully silly!" said Desirée coldly

"Heart's Desire," said Dicky, "I love you. Don't turn up your nose at me!" He put the manuscript in his pocket, and they talked of things less perishable than editors and the cheques they sign.

But Dicky continued unconvinced.

He took "Blue Roses" home and put it upon the dissecting table. At the end of three hours' consideration, with his student's lamp smoking vilely, because in his absorption he forgot to notice the thing, he smote his fist upon the typewritten sheets, and flung up his hands in defiance.

"It stands," said Dicky. "By George, it stands! And the men with the money can take it or leave it. It's good work, though I say it as shouldn't, and I'll butcher it for nobody's Roman holiday. Where in Hades did I put the tobacco?"

All of which was the right spirit—when you can afford it.

So Dicky took the story and put it in an envelope, added return postage, and a prayer, and posted it to the prize competition, which kept it a great number of months in silence. About this time Dicky grew large with conceit of himself, and left the *Herald*.

"If I'm ever going to make good at this story game," he told Desirée, "now's the time—and I can't do it with my hands tied."

Desirée fingered the white hyacinths at her waist—this, you will understand, is purely a figure of speech—they were roses, to be accurate; a white hyacinth, once out of its bed in the garden, is a clumsy little vegetable. Desirée fingered Dicky's white hyacinths then, and lifted her eyebrows.

"Still," she said, "you've got to live. I don't want to be inquisitive, Dicky, but how will you manage?"

"Got a cheque yesterday," said Dicky, "for 'The Surrender of Suzanne.'"

"It's a nice name," said Desirée approvingly.

"It's a rotten story," said Dicky the frank. "All pink and white marshmallow filling, garnished with kisses. The hero is a perfect lady and the heroine is a star-eyed flapper. He meets her at a house-party and she goes riding in his car. They play bridge in the ancestral hall, and he takes her out to dinner. They speak repartee, and whenever the action threatens to lag he crushes her to him. It's a great tale. The editor would be glad to see something more from me at an early date."

"Oh, Dicky!" said Desirée, "I'm so glad!" She patted his hand impulsively. "It sounds awfully nice."

"It's the most unholy rot!" said Dicky grimly; "but the cheque's real money. I cashed it at once."

It lasted Dicky, that real money, exactly two weeks, at the end of which time he ceased inspired drudgery on a new story long enough to pawn his overcoat. Spring was mercifully upon the land. The magazine that had taken "The Surrender of Suzanne" sent him a cheque for a second idyll of the same sort—written between glorious dashes at a story of almost Gallic distress and intensity. Dicky was working hard, but he refused steadily to see in what direction his efforts were dragging him. When "Who Travels Alone" came back from its fifteenth journey, with a very delightful letter of refusal and regret, he opened it almost disinterestedly. "Unnecessarily painful," said the letter, "but unquestionably good work." Would he send them something else—a little less sordid?

"I will, damn you!" roared Dicky, and sent them the adventure, which he sat up till dawn to write, of a maiden lady and the love of her youth. It was a saccharine little tale couched in phrases like spun sugar. It ended happily—"Take her, and be hanged to you!" quoth Dicky to the hero at the crucial moment. And it sold.

Whereupon the florist received an order for more white hyacinths.

Desirée was at home to Dicky that night. She wore a gown of rose colour, and waited for him in a big chair beneath the lamp. She gave him both her hands when he came. Her lips were very red.

"Dicky," she said, "you're a dear! The flowers came this afternoon. You sold a story, of course—which one?"

"'Indian Summer,'" said Dicky slowly. He no longer sneered at his own reversions to popular form. His eyes were hungry on Desirée's face. At the moment the story seemed not so much to matter beside the

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He sat on a corner of the table and thrust his hands into his trouser pockets. . . . Desirée . . . laid her hand upon his arm. [*Page 294, col. 2.*]

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slender curve of her cheek, the droop of her lashes, the rounded, incredible sweetness of her chin.

"It's a week since I've seen you," he said resentfully.

"I know," said Desirée. "Whose fault?"

"I've been working," he told her, "like a day-labourer; and the only night I 'phoned——"

"I was going to the theatre," she smiled. "It was an old engagement, Dicky."

"Rotten luck for me!" said Dicky.

Desirée played with her rings. Her big eyes, suddenly lifted, swept Dicky's face.

"What are you working at now?" she asked. "Oh, Dicky, I'm so proud of your Suzanne story. It's out, you know."

"I've passed it on several bookstalls without speaking," said Dicky cheerfully. "Lord!"

"I think it's perfectly lovely," said Desirée. "Are you going to do any more like that? Go on, Dicky—tell me about it. You know I like to hear. You know I'm dreadfully interested. Go on!"

So Dicky told her about the thing he was then at work on—a tale of a little shop-girl; a sordid romance with an abrupt and unpleasing, but not unnatural, ending.

Desirée shook her head when he had finished, and sighed.

"You won't sell it," she said.

"Think not?" said Dicky.

"It's too stupid and unhappy."

"It's true, all right."

"It doesn't matter how true a thing is," said Desirée wisely, "unless it's amusing—or pretty."

"You're a little heathen!" said Dicky.

Desirée flickered her eyelashes. She did it deliberately, and Dicky sprang into flame on the instant.

He left his chair, as she had left hers a moment before, and followed her to the table in the centre of the library. Arrived there, he endeavoured to put both arms around her, but Desirée evaded him. That is to say, she placed both small, supple hands flat-palmed against his chest and kept him off.

"Dicky," she murmured, "be good—or I'll send you home."

"My Heart's Desire," said Dicky worshipfully, "I *am* good, and I have no home. Only a boarding-house and a coffee-pot. Aren't you sorry for me?"

"Poor Dicky!" said Desirée cooingly.

Dicky edged a bit nearer.

"Sorry enough," he questioned daringly, "to want me to have a home?"

"If that," said Desirée, "is the thing you want most——"

"The thing I want most," said Dicky, "goes *in* the house. I've seen it there, in dreams. I've seen it with its feet on my fender—and I've seen it pouring coffee from my coffee-pot. I've seen it singing songs at my piano that I'm going to have some day, and I've seen it sitting on the arm of my big chair—what?"

"Who was in the big chair?" asked Desirée. Ever so little the pressure of the warding palms grew less.

"I was," said Dicky, and gathered her close with a bear-like movement for which she had possibly not been prepared.

In any case, she slipped herself free before he could kiss her.

"You must not jump to conclusions, Dicky," said Desirée reproachfully. And Dicky let her go.

"Oh, very well," he submitted, with meaning. He sat on a corner of the table and thrust his hands into his trouser pockets. Under his breath he whistled a tune. It was a ribald tune at that, and it had to do with fine weather, which, it seemed, was always to be expected when good fellows were assembled. He did not look at Desirée and he did not smile.

"Dicky!" said Desirée presently. She twisted her red young mouth into an appealing question.

"Heart's Desire!" said Dicky, still not looking at her.

Desirée stood rather near him; suddenly, by an imperceptible little step, she stood nearer still and laid her hand upon his arm. If she had been less sincere, she might have said something utterly inane and marred the effect atrociously. As it was, she merely lifted her great dark eyes, and Dicky promptly flung himself overboard—if you see what I mean. Those eyes were not unlike the sea on a warm, moonlight night, and Dicky would have drowned deliciously—but she threw him a rope.

"Oh, Dicky—you do, don't you?" said Desirée, somewhat unsteadily.

"With all my heart—and soul—and strength!" said Dicky, queer pauses between the words. "And with all my mind!"

Yet he did not take his hands out of his pockets. His face grew rather white with the effort of keeping them there. "What's the use?" he added.

"Blind," said Desirée softly, "stone-blind! And he doesn't even know it!"

She turned a little away from him, her hand slipping from his coat-sleeve.

"Don't torture me," said Dicky simply. "I know it's funny—but it hurts."

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So Desirée came back. This time she stooped and laid her cheek against his sleeve, and murmured something indistinguishable. Dicky gathered that he was her dear, dear boy, and did he want it in words of one syllable?

Whereat Dicky kissed her, taking his hands from his pockets at last in order to accomplish the thing completely. He had never kissed her before, and it went to both their heads. At least, he muttered in broken phrases an amazing amount of nonsense, and Desirée, the difficult, had no answer beyond her silent lips.

Ultimately, the rose-coloured cloud described a spiral glide, slid gently above the library floor, and landed.

Womanlike, Desirée set foot first upon the earth. Her opening words are worthy of record:

"*What* have you done to my hair?"

She patted and twisted and pulled it with fingers that shook a little. Her cheeks still flamed with the ecstasy of the flight. She averted her eyes with the tardy instinct of the ostrich who thrusts its head into the sand.

"Will you marry me?" asked Dicky a trifle huskily.

"Oh!" cried Desirée, stricken to wide-eyed amazement. "Dicky! I thought you had asked me already! Oh, Dicky!" She faltered into breathless laughter. Dicky followed.

"Only," said Desirée slowly, and this was necessarily some little while later—even the most daring of narrators must respect the fourth unity of the drama known as Love's Young Dream—"only, Dicky, how can we?"

"How can we what?" inquired Dicky rapturously. He was at that moment engaged in kissing her ten white fingers, one after the other. It is a process requiring time and impartiality. Dicky allowed it both.

"To—marry," said Desirée, "one has to have—well, something to marry on, Dicky—you know what I mean. I'm not mercenary, but, my own dearest boy, if you won't make your story-book people live happily ever after—how can *we*?"

Dicky saw—abruptly. He let the last two fingers go unkissed, though he still held them.

"That's true," he said, "that's quite true. I suppose I can't ask you to live on a semi-occasional cheque interspersed with polite regrets—eh?"

"Oh, but Dicky," said Desirée, "when you *can* do stories like 'The Surrender of Suzanne'."

"And get away with them," said Dicky. "It is amazing the amount of slush the gentle reader will consume—well?"

"It would be so easy," urged Desirée. She looked enchantingly wistful.

"What would be so easy?" inquired Dicky guardedly.

It was not easy to be guarded when Desirée looked wistful.

She sighed—and smiled, tilting her head on one side, and looking at the floor.

"Everything, Dicky. Money—prospects—possibilities. The coffee-pot—and the fender—and the big chair—and the piano—it would be so easy!"

"You mean," said Dicky concisely, "that I could easily make enough to marry on, with Suzanne and her ilk—happy endings—pink-and-white poppy-cock—tea-table patter?"

"I don't see" said Desirée, quite as solid in her convictions, "why a happy ending should be pink-and-white poppy-cock necessarily. There must be lots of happiness in the world that isn't stupid."

"The happy people have no history," Dicky reminded her at once. "You can't make a gripping romance out of Darby and Joan."

"Just the same," said Desirée, "they like to read about themselves, and the editors know it. And the people who are sick and sorry and sad like to forget it in a story where all the dreams come true, and both live happy ever after—oh, Dicky, can't you see?"

But Dicky could not see. He even let Desirée draw her fingers free and turn away from him.

"There's no good in any art," he said stubbornly, "unless it's true. It may take longer to win out, but I've got to stick to my highest reach."

Desirée looked at him once, briefly.

"Meantime," she said, "you pretend to want to marry me."

"Pretend!" cried Dicky. "Good God! Hear her!"

"Pretend," repeated Desirée slowly. "It must be pretence, because you sacrifice it, without the least hesitation, to a hobby."

"*What* did you say?" asked Dicky.

"To a hobby," said Desirée again, "a fad, for writing unhappy stories which you won't sell, when you could quite easily write happy ones——"

She was unkind, if you like, was Desirée, but she was fond of Dicky, and she wanted very badly to pour coffee from that coffee-pot. Also, it is not impossible that she was jealous of the children of his heart, those bedraggled manuscripts whom nobody would let in because they cried too much.

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"You could," she said again reproachfully, "quite easily—couldn't you, Dicky?"

"I could," said Dicky. "Likewise, I could undoubtedly get a pound a day for standing in a haberdasher's window and trying on collars before the populace, but I don't seem to see myself doing it—yet."

"Aren't you rather rude?" suggested Desirée coldly.

"I dare say," said Dicky. "I beg your pardon."

Then he swallowed his resentment and put his pride in his pocket.

"Oh, Heart's Desirée," he begged, "what are we wasting time like this for? Don't bother your darling head about the stories. I'll pay the minister somehow."

But Desirée did not smile.

"Will you stop doing tragedies," she conditioned, "and stick to the kind that sell?"

She should have known better. Dicky was one of the tribe who can be led by a daisy chain, but will not be driven by a cat o' nine tails.

"If you mean will I give up what I consider decent work," he said, "and turn out potboilers, I will *not*. Sorry."

"Ah!" said Desirée. "Then, of course——"

She did not finish. They faced each other silently, and the white hyacinths that were the price of Dicky's latest shame drooped on Desirée's gown.

"What made you think you cared?" she asked at last curiously, with a choking little laugh.

Dicky only knew that it was a laugh, and it took him on the raw.

"You," he said rather brutally; "and I made you think *you* cared, didn't I? Was it all a mistake?"

"You love your stories," said Desirée, "better than me."

And said Dicky:

"If *you* loved *me* enough, the stories wouldn't come into it at all."

The rose-coloured cloud, which had been waiting and bumping quietly against the ceiling, at this juncture shredded off into thin air. It had a premonition, which was presently verified, that Dicky would go home on foot.

As for Desirée, when the hall door had closed definitely upon her recreant lover, she went into the sitting-room and said goodnight to her father, who was drowsing comfortably over the evening paper. Then she went upstairs and went to bed. The last thing she heard before sleep came to her was the clock on the stairs striking half-past four. By that time she had parted with a number of tears, and was too tired to think any further.

Dicky went home in a dull fog of desolation and let himself into an empty room—doubly empty, because now no dream sat upon the arm of the big chair by the window. He lit the gas, and absently held the match till it burnt his fingers. Then he lit a cigarette and picked up his mail from the table.

There was a bill which he scowled at and flung aside, and there was a letter which told him, in pleasing verbiage that "Blue Roses" had won first place in the prize competition. The judges, said the letter, had been greatly struck by the absolute realism and artistic sincerity of the story, as well as by its admirable craftsmanship.

Dicky read the letter three times. Upon the third reading, he folded it carefully and returned it to its envelope, knocking the ash from his cigarette when he had done so and straightening his tie.

Thereafter he remarked to himself dazedly, "H'mph!" And still thereafter he sat down in the big chair, put his elbows upon his knees, and took his head between his hands.

To be nakedly frank, his first thought had been: How many white hyacinths will five hundred pounds buy? But his second came in greyer guise. It was that Desirée would not want them now.

For Desirée had not been willing to take him for what he was. She had not trusted his ultimate success. She had not believed in him. And over this Dicky agonised longest. You must believe in the Dickies, you women who love them, or they are not for you.

She had asked of him what his soul despised, and she had asked it confidently. If he loved her, he would sell his birthright, and the steam of the pottage was rank in Dicky's nostrils. On top of this, here was his creed vindicated, here was his work approved, here was "Blue Roses" victorious.

You will not smile at Dicky because he chuckled once, and whistled once, and then sighed desperately deep. He was a man, and the woman had said she loved him—but also he was a scribbler, and his fingers itched for the pen.

Big stories thronged before his mind. He sat in the big chair by the window till long past midnight, obsessed by a vision of coming glories. Then he rose and stretched himself, and the dreams fell from him. The room was still and ghostly. The gaslight flickered on four dreary walls, and smoke hung stale in the curtains.

"Home!" said Dicky, and went to bed,

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where for some hours he lay and stared into the dark.

Next morning he wrote Desirée a letter—three letters to be exact—and destroyed them all. He twice got as far as the telephone, and once took down the receiver, but hung it up again without ringing her up. In the afternoon he called on the editor of the magazine that fathered the prize competition, and was received with soul-satisfying congratulations.

"You are very young, are you not?" asked the editor. He was a delightful personality with snowy hair and a beard.

"Not so young as I look, perhaps," was Dicky's only defence. Another time he would have grinned.

"Ah, well," said the editor, "you don't want to mistake sensationalism for tragedy—that's a mistake youth often makes. Not that there's any question of such a thing in your 'Blue Roses'—but, after all, it's a pleasant sort of world—eh?"

Dicky escaped from the interview as soon as might be. He passed a florist's window on his way home, and the sight of white hyacinths tripped and blinded him. His success was almost ashes in his mouth—almost, however, not quite.

Directly he reached home he began a new story. With that he drugged himself through two more days and nights, and on the third day, when he had barely written the last line of it, Desirée sent for him.

That last line was brief, and merely referred to warm, red earth drawn over the unfortunate hero. Dicky, you see, was unconvinced.

He went to Desirée after a bath, a shave, and an invigorating meal, all of which he had neglected while the story was in progress, and Desirée's heart turned over in her breast at the first glimpse of him.

"Dicky!" she cried brokenly. "My poor, poor boy! Did it hurt so dreadfully? Oh, it was wicked of me! I can never forgive myself! It's been so long—so long——"

As a matter of fact, Dicky was shockingly pale, and three white nights had shadowed his eyes considerably; but that is neither here nor there. Desirée conceived that his haggard appearance was her handiwork, and remorse destroyed what little resistance love had left to Dicky's theories.

She hid her face upon his shoulder and wept.

"It doesn't matter," she said, "about the stories—nothing matters. I can never forgive myself for making you suffer so! I am not worth loving——"

"Hear her!" said Dicky, as once before. He applied himself to the task of consolation with some success.

When Desirée was calmer, he told her about the editor and "Blue Roses" and the five hundred pounds.

"Now you can marry me," he wound up vainglorious y.

"I was going to marry you, anyhow," said Desirée humbly. She dried her eyes on his handkerchief.

Later—

"Dicky," said Desirée, "but our story will have a happy ending!"

"My Heart's Desire," said Dicky, "you trust me! The stars will turn green with jealousy."

Dicky was drunk with happiness. He had stood afar off, and she had called him back. The man in him sang for victory. Also there was the victory of the story with its five hundred that made all things possible.

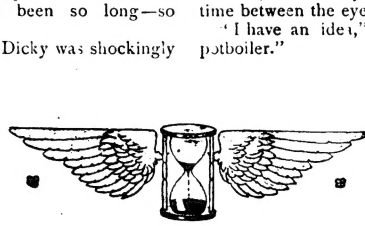
Then all at once he shuddered. Possibly a rabbit ran over his grave.

"Cold, Dicky?" asked Desirée anxiously.

Dicky said he was not cold. To cut off further inquiry, he kissed her; but in his soul he looked upon a naked, new-born fact. If Desirée wanted white hyacinths hereafter, willy-nilly he would have to get them. The five hundred would not last for ever.

"What are you frowning about?" asked Desirée, and Dicky kissed her again, this time between the eyes.

"I have an idea," he said grimly, "for a potboiler."



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